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SURVIVING DOUBLE PERIL

Michael I. Sherman

SURVIVING DOUBLE PERIL

**Hunted by the Nazis,
then political prisoner of the Soviets**

Michael I. Sherman

I dedicate this book to my Parents who gave me my life
and
to Mrs. Franciszka Lenartowicz who saved my life.

Acknowledgements

I am grateful to my wife, Phyllis, for her help, encouragement and constructive critique in writing my memoirs.

I am also thankful to Joan Katine, our friend, for editing my manuscript and making it more readable and grammatically correct.

After living in America for sixty years, not only do I still retain “some” accent but also write with an accent, which Joan tried to minimize.

Some of the pictures in my memoirs were incorporated from Inger Sherman’s manuscript about the Sherman, Jensen and Holender families. All who read this manuscript found it an excellent source of information.

Table of Contents

Prologue	iv
Chapter 1 My Grandparents and Parents	1
Chapter 2 My Uncles, Aunts and Cousins	13
Chapter 3 Hitler's Insatiable Desire to Rule The World	20
Chapter 4 Life Under The Communist System	27
Chapter 5 Germany Attacks Soviet Union	37
Chapter 6 Living on Aryan Papers	45
Chapter 7 From One Peril Into Another	62
Chapter 8 Return to Communist Poland	70
Chapter 9 Back in School	74
Chapter 10 Giving Up On Poland	84
Chapter 11 Starting a New Life in Canada	100
Chapter 12 50 Years Later	108
Appendix	121

PROLOGUE

For nearly 60 years I avoided thinking or talking about my Holocaust and WWII experiences. Those memories were well hidden somewhere in back of my mind. Only occasionally they appeared as nightmares.

I think that unless one was able to stop thinking about those experiences it would be impossible to lead a normal life. I was able to do that and I had a very enjoyable life after the war.

I had no intention of ever writing my memoirs until one day at Alisal, a resort in California, in 2004. At my 80th-birthday celebration (an excuse for a family get together) Irene, my niece, brought the subject up. She wanted me to write or record my recollections of our family so that her two girls, Katy and Grace, would know something of their family. Since I am now the only living link to the Sherman family past, I agreed to do it.

I decided to try. At first it was emotionally and technically difficult. I type slowly using only two fingers. I tried to dictate but that did not work too well for me. My nightmares became more frequent, causing me to put metal guardrails on my bed to prevent me from falling out while trying to escape the Nazis in my sleep.

I was almost ready to give up. I tried to find something written about other Jewish men who had survived in a similar fashion to me by using Aryan papers. I had very little success. I think now that there were probably very few of us. I realize now how lucky I was. It is possible that some of the Jews who survived on Aryan papers continued to live under their assumed names after the war, fearing that history might repeat itself.

I believe that there were more Jewish women who survived than men by using these false papers. The men, being circumcised, were easier to identify and probably because of that men were less willing to even try using this method of escape.

I never met anyone who had similar experiences to mine except my two cousins, Stefan and Ludek. The odds that three of us from one family would survive using the Aryan papers were astronomical. (I am enclosing a brief description of the mental stress involved in living by using Aryan papers that I found on the Internet. I do agree with the comments. It is very difficult to fight alone and not have anyone with whom to share experiences or seek advice. See appendix.)

Before I started writing this memoir, I never realized how long I lived under my assumed name as “Aleksander Lalicz.” It turned out to be five years — from November 1942 to the time I arrived to Paris in December 1947. I used this name until I left Poland, including the time from October 1944 to February 1946, during which I was held a prisoner in a Soviet concentration camp.

(For more detailed information about my cousin Ludek’s war experiences, his mother’s death, and what happened to Stefan during the war and immediately after, refer to Ludek’s letter to his uncle Roman Holender who was still in the Soviet Union. He wrote that letter only 3 weeks after the end of WWII in Europe, and the translation of that letter is included later. See appendix.)

It is amazing to see from Ludek’s letter how foolish and lucky Stefan was by going to Krakow and living there for some time under his new name of Stefan Warski where many people knew him as Sherman. If anyone who knew him from before reported him to the Gestapo, he would not have been around for very long. I believe that Stefan was lucky for most of his life, and was very charming and generous. You can get the feeling from Ludek’s letter, on the other hand, how much more responsible Ludek was.

In Ludek’s letter, when he refers to Mietek Lenartowicz as a friend of his cousin, that is me. When he writes about his uncle, the professor, who was shot, he is talking about my father.

I realize that writing about WWII to the younger generation is like writing about ancient history. I understand the feelings. I remember

when my father talked to me about the First World War (1914–1918). It seemed to me like he was talking about ancient Greek and Roman times. To facilitate understanding of the events, I have included brief background historical notes in several places. I hope they will help.

Looking back I felt throughout the whole war as if I was fighting in the trenches, with the enemy all around me. WWII was not like Vietnam or today in Iraq — where to us the war was or is remote. One can choose to read about it in the papers or see it on TV or even ignore it. While I was living as Lalicz, there was not even a minute during which I was not conscious of being hunted, pursued and on guard constantly.

Chapter I

MY GRANDPARENTS AND PARENTS

Grandparents

Before the Second World War the majority of the Scherman family lived in Krakow, Poland. Krakow was and still is a nice, fairly big old city in the western part of Poland. The town was spared from any damage during WWII.

In the early 1930s the city of Krakow decided that they would build a new bridge across the Vistula River, right where Henry's first house was located. Like it or not, he had to sell his house to the city. I hope he got a fair price. Eventually a big steel bridge was built and named after the Polish Marshal Pilsudski and the bridge is still there.

The new house that Henry bought was not too far from where they had lived before. Now they lived on Mostowa Street 1, (Most in Polish means Bridge). Henry and Felicia lived upstairs in their new house. I remember their living room where a big RCA gramophone was sitting in a prominent place. I still see the top cover of the nice large mahogany gramophone cabinet with a picture of a white terrier dog in front of a big brass tube. This was the trademark of the RCA Company for many years. There were many records of opera, songs of great singers of the time like Enrico Caruso and Beniamino Gigli, to name a few. In those days people did not yet own radios.



**Grandparents,
Henry and
Felicia (Cypres)
Scherman**

Henry, my grandfather, owned a house right on the Vistula River.

Please note they haven't invented air-conditioning yet. They used to open windows.



At that time all gramophones were hand-wound, and had to be rewound each time after a record was played. I enjoyed manning the gramophone and I was even allowed to change the needle when required. I still can hear the one tune that my uncle David (Melany's husband) and I liked and played over and over — it was an Italian song, *Tiritomba, Tiritomba*. Out of curiosity, I recently looked up the song on the Internet and found it. It sounded the same. I guess my memory is so far so good. No harm in bragging a little.

In the early 1990s, when I visited Poland and Ukraine and looked up my grandparent's house in Krakow, it seemed very small, which so often happens to people when they revisit their childhood places.

Henry owned a nice store which served army officers. He was in the haberdashery business selling things like shirts, elegant gloves, scarves, medals, all kinds of embroideries connected with military rank

insignias, military caps, riding boots, etc. On the occasions when we visited Krakow I was sometimes given a few obsolete medals, probably from the Austro-Hungarian times. (Those are the only medals I have received so far in my life.) The store was located on Florianska Street. The last time I was in Krakow (1992) I could not pinpoint where exactly the store was. The street name still exists in the center of the old town. As a matter of fact, the whole center of the city is very old.

Poland, after 150 years of occupation by Austria, Russia and Germany, was reestablished as an independent country as a part of the Versailles Treaty in 1918. In the years between WWI and WWII (1918-1939, in historical perspective a rather short time) the Polish army and specifically the Polish Legionnaires took all the credit for liberating Poland after 150 years of occupation by Germany, Austria and Russia, which was not the fact. Actually, as I understand it, the bulk of the credit goes to a famous Polish pianist, Ignacy Paderewski, who lobbied successfully for an independent Poland. Nevertheless, during the intervening years it was the Polish Legionnaires who ended up with all the power and privileges.

In Poland the army was "the elite." All the young officers were mostly concerned with their appearances. Some people called the Polish Army a "Parade Army," and there was a lot of truth in it. As I remember, they sure looked good during the military parades. The officers wore corsets like women, their boots shined like mirrors, and they spent their afternoons in coffeehouses chasing pretty girls. Our grandfather Henry was in the right business.

Henry died in his seventies (around 1935); I believe it was his heart. I believe that Felicia, my Grandmother, did not like me very much. I am not quite sure why, but probably because she did not like my mother, or maybe because I was not very nice to her favorite grandson, Ludwik (Mela's son). The only redeeming quality my grandmother Felicia had, as far as I am concerned, is the fact that she lived well into her nineties and maybe she passed some of her good genes on to some of us. She died in the early 1940s.

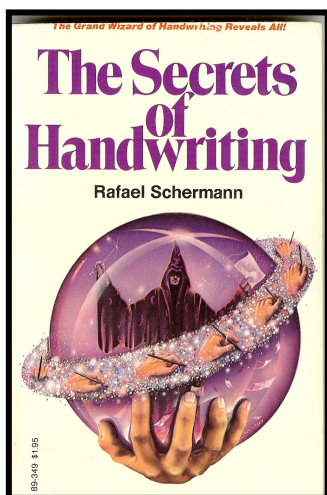
My grandfather Henry Scherman and his wife Felicia (nee Cypres) had three sons — Ignacy, Mauricy, Anatol (my father) and a daughter Melany.

My uncle Ignacy moved from Krakow to Berlin in early 1920s. He must have died there before 1924, since I have been named after him and I was born in 1924. He died suddenly quite young of twisted guts. He had two sons, Hazi and Jacques. He owned a shoe store in Berlin. His two sons and their mother emigrated after Hitler's rise to power in the early 1930s to what then was Palestine. Hazi was killed fighting for the independent State of Israel. I met Jacques in Frankfurt, Germany in the 1980s. He moved back from Israel to Germany a few years before I met him.

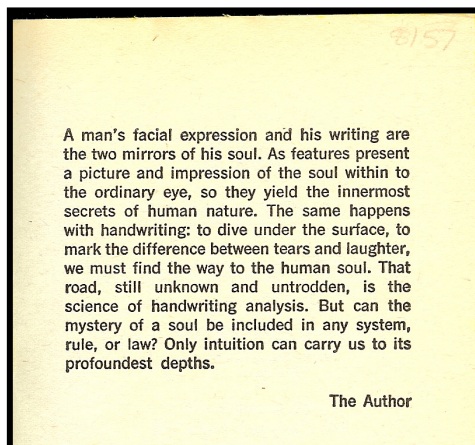
My parents were married in May 1923 in Krakow. They moved to Stanislawow (now Ivan-Frankivsk), then in the eastern part of Poland (now Ukraine), where I was born in May 1924. I was their only child.

My grandfather Henry must have had at least one brother since my father referred to Rafael Scherman as his first cousin. I do not know if my grandfather Henry had any other brothers or sisters.

Rafael was a very famous graphologist. He published a number of books about graphology. There were many books also written about him. (I found one of his books translated into English which I'm going to give to Irene.) Rafael was also a passionate art collector.



Cover page of Rafael's book



Inside the cover

I was once in his apartment in Krakow before the war and I remember seeing many paintings on his apartment walls. As a matter of fact, one could hardly see any bare spots on the walls (see below). His paintings included famous painters like Rembrandt, Van Dyke, Titian, etc. He also had a large collection of pocket watches in numerous display boxes, as well as a collection of all kinds of small bells. I found out not long ago that just before WWII he shipped his entire collection to Warsaw where he thought it would be safer than in Krakow. The train carrying the collection was bombed and all the collectibles perished. Obviously his advice to himself wasn't good.



Rafael Scherman, the graphologist.



Partial collection of Rafael's bells—he had many more.



Rafael's collection of paintings. It's interesting to note there isn't much space left between the pictures.

I would recommend that all of you try to read the book. Who knows, maybe one of you got his gene and might become a great graphologist. Raphael became a very wealthy man through the gifts he received from his grateful clients.

That is as much history as I know about the Scherman family.

As regards to my mother's family, I only knew my grandfather, Samuel Schein, and my aunt and uncle. My maternal grandmother (Hermann) died before I was born. My mother, born in Myslewice in 1896, had a brother Max and a sister Blanka. They both lived in Krakow before WWII. They and their families all perished in the Holocaust. My mother's brother Max was a character and a Jack of all trades.

My uncle Max had two different businesses going at the same time. One was designing and making ladies corsets and bras. He would buy the material and cut it into the appropriate shapes and pieces using different templates. He had a cottage industry of women who would sew them together. The finished product was sold to many stores. His second business was sort of an offspring of the first one. He would buy old sewing machines, recondition them into first class condition and then resell them. He told me once about one particular sewing machine which came with a curse. Every time he would restore this machine to first class condition, it would come back for repairs after it was involved in some kind of an accident. This must have happened at least half a dozen times with this particular machine. One hears about people being accident-prone, but when a victim is a sewing machine the story is amusing — likely why my uncle told it to me.

Parents

My father, Anatol, was born in 1887, in Krakow, Poland and my mother, Augusta (Schein) was born in 1896, in Myslewicze, a small town near Krakow. Later her family moved to Krakow. My parents were married in May 1923.

During WWI (1914–1918), my father served in the Austro–Hungarian army. Poland did not exist then as an independent country. He served as a medic on a hospital train which traveled to the front to pick up the wounded soldiers.

Before WWII (1939) we lived in the eastern part of Poland, first in Stanislawow, where I was born (1924), and then we moved to Drohobycz in 1937.

My father was a language professor teaching German, Latin and old Greek in a public high school and lyceum, which was like our senior high school here. In Poland in the 1900s being a professor granted one a very respectable social standing in the community. The highest social status in Poland then was to be a university professor.

The state government controlled all public schools and the teachers were automatically government employees. There were also private schools but their teachers did not have the same privileges as those who worked for the state government. The government job came with job security and promised retirement pay, and the immediate family paid only half rail fare, since the government owned all the railroads. We took advantage of the reduced fares and traveled quite frequently from the eastern part of Poland where we lived, to Krakow where most of our family lived.

In the early 1920s the Ukrainians attacked and occupied the eastern part of Poland, which is now part of the Ukraine. During that time my father was teaching in Stanislawow. The Ukrainian government demanded that the persons who wanted to continue to work for their government must sign a pledge of alliance. Most of the Poles did sign.

However, my father refused to sign this pledge and he lost his job. Later when anti-Semitism grew stronger in Poland and many Jews lost their government jobs, my father was able to keep his job by pointing to his refusal as proof of his patriotism. He also had a friend, his classmate Roman Pollak who held a high position in Department of Education who was willing to help when needed. In the late 1930's, the anti-Semitic feelings grew even stronger and the Polish government took steps against Jewish teachers. My father was demoted to teaching in lower grades with a lower salary.

His good friend Roman Pollak told my father that if he got a Ph.D., he would have to be restored to his previous position. So my father decided to get the Ph.D. degree. I remember my father studying for the exams and I still remember the names of the different philosophers that my father was then quoting. My father passed the exams and got the Ph.D. degree. I now appreciate how difficult it must have been. At his age, while working, to study for his Ph.D. was not easy. After some time he got back his previous position as a professor. We did have to move to Drohobycz, where there was a job opening for him at that time.

The Drohobycz area had quite a lot of oil deposits and an abundance of natural gas at that time. What was interesting to me as we moved from Stanislawow to Drohobycz was that in Drohobycz the city would not turn off the street gaslights during day but let the gaslights burn continuously. It would have been more expensive for the city to have men turning on the streetlights every evening and then turning them off every morning.

In Drohobycz we first used natural gas to light our apartment. Before we had electricity, which was quite an improvement, one had to just turn a switch on, and the light came on. When we lived in Stanislawow, which did not have natural gas, people used kerosene lamps for lighting. I hope you appreciate the conveniences of today's world.

In spite of the fact that we certainly were considered part of the middle class, we never owned a home. As a matter of fact, not many people

could afford to live in their own houses. Because most people lived in city apartments, the distances that they had to walk were within reason. They did not need to have a car.

We always lived in apartments, which were quite nice, with hardwood floors, high ceilings, gas heating and full bathrooms. I do remember one feature in our apartments. Each room had a tall ceramic tile stove in the corner, which was originally wood fired and then later converted to gas. It was very nice in the winter to stand with one's back against the stove. Those stoves also looked very attractive. (Phyllis and I once had an idea of importing such a stove from Vienna and maybe having it installed in our house in Victoria, which was never built. It certainly sounds silly now to have one in Santa Barbara; we would have to import winter to be comfortable.)

We had a live-in maid for as long as I can remember. A good friend of mine, Lydia Golston, a Polish lady who now lives in Seattle and spent her younger years in Poland, once told me she would gladly trade in all the gadgets we have here, such as a washing machine, dishwasher and microwave oven, for one good maid.

The earliest recollection that I have from my life is that once as a child I hid in a corner behind a door in our apartment. It caused quite a commotion. My parents thought I was kidnapped. Probably they were influenced by the Lindbergh case. As I found out later, we were not famous. They contacted the police. Many friends came to help search for me. Someone found me because my toes were sticking out from under the door. And that ended the excitement. To my best recollection that was the only close encounter with the police in my younger years. We had many good friends of different religious persuasions. My parents were not particularly religious, however, they did observe the High Holy Days.

Stanislawow and Drohobycz were small towns, not very far apart in kilometers, but in those days, because of lack of good transportation, it seemed to us like we had moved to the other end of the earth. My parents never owned a car, which was not so unusual then and, as a

matter of fact, no one in the Scherman family owed a car prior to WWII. I would like to mention that it was Stefan who was the first one to own a BMW motorcycle in our family, right after the war. Most distances were covered on foot, or sometimes by horse and buggy or bicycle.



**My mother, Augusta Sherman
1896-1943**



**My father, Anatol Sherman, 1887-1942
My father and I on bicycles in Stanislawow before we moved to Drohobycz (1937)**

I remember, as a young boy, getting a bicycle and later my father also learned to ride a bicycle, relatively late in his life. I am displaying the photograph of my father and me on bicycles. By the way, this is the only picture of my father that I have. I also have a photograph which I think is my mother, but I'm not quite sure. I got these two photographs from my cousin, Jacques, whom I met in Frankfurt, Germany. He had a bunch of photographs that he showed me. Looking at one of the photographs I asked him who it was. He told me he thought it might be my mother, but he didn't want to say so, in order not to influence me. After my questions, we both decided it must have been a photograph of my mother.



Picture of Jacques and I in Frankfurt in the 1980s



The tile stoves were used to heat rooms since central heating in those days was unknown. This kind of stove not only had a practical use, but also added to the décor of an apartment and could be quite fancy and expensive.

Chapter II

MY UNCLES, AUNTS AND COUSINS

Uncle Mauricy and Aunt Franciszka Scherman

Mauricy and Franciszka (Holender) Scherman, my uncle and aunt, were the parents of Stefan and Ludek Scherman. Mauricy (Moniek), by education was a textile engineer. He started working in Bielsko, a town near Krakow. Bielsko was the city best known as the center of high quality textile manufacturing in Poland. The fabrics produced there competed well with the fabrics produced in England. Moniek had a very good position which he later gave up to move back to Krakow.

Moniek married Franciszka Holender from Bochnia (a small town near Krakow). They had two sons, Stefan (1915) and Ludek (1918), both born in Bielsko. After they moved back to Krakow, Moniek became a manufacturer's representative and gave up his textile career.

According to my mother, both Stefan and Ludek were "angels." Ludek was about six years older than I, and Stefan was three years older than Ludek. They were always held up as good examples. I hated that. I was frequently reminded that Stefan and Ludek were well-behaved, good students and had good social manners, like kissing the hands of ladies (which I wasn't too eager to do, but that was then the custom). One was supposed to click his heels, bow, kiss the hand, and remain quiet. Being an only child, I was a little spoiled. I can now admit to that. All those rules did not sit well with me. Of course I resented that, until I got to know them better. We were all alike.

The very first time we came to Krakow and we visited my cousins and our relatives, Ludek and Stefan quickly won me over as they carried me on their backs. They had a BB gun, which they let me handle, and they also had a kayak. All that was enough to charm me, and from then on we became friends for life.

Financially Moniek and his family were well off, judging by their standard of living. They lived in a very nice modern apartment with

high ceilings, centrally located, etc. They all were well dressed, particularly Stefan. Stefan took violin lessons. I do not know if Ludek had them too — I don't think so. I remember after the war Stefan telling me that he got his appreciation for music (retained for rest of his life) from having the violin lessons as a young boy.



Picture of Stefan and Ludek



Frania's sister, Stefan, and Frania

Stefan always cared very much about his appearance. He had to have the very best of everything. Some people could have said that he was a little snobbish. He cared about his friends and had a good heart. He would take the shirt off his back and give to anyone who would ask for it. Stefan was naturally charming without trying — most of the people took an instant liking to him.

Frania and her sons spent summers in Krynica, a vacation and a spa resort near Krakow, where one searched a cure for one's non-existing illnesses. Krynica was a fashionable place where people would promenade in the afternoon, drink mineral water, and see others and to be seen themselves. This was a part of Krakow social life. I realize now that I very often say "near" Krakow. In those days most people did not own cars, only the extremely wealthy ones did. People tended to stay closer to home. So when I say "near" in reality it wasn't that close. It was 30-40 miles at least.

My aunt “Frانيا” was very strict. After later getting to know her better, I believe the fact that Stefan and Ludek were well-behaved boys was because they had no choice but to behave. She was sort of a no-nonsense lady — nice and fair but strict.

Frانيا came from a large family. She had five sisters and one brother, Roman Holender. He was a superior court judge in Krakow. Roman and his wife Minka had a son Adam, who survived the war with his parents by being deported by the Soviets to a labor camp in Siberia. Adam was too young to be drafted into the army.

After the war ended I kept in close contact with the Holenders. After Adam came back from Siberia to Poland, he graduated from a Film Academy in Lodz.

I heard many stories from Ludek. I remember one story about the end of a kayak life. The kayak got to be quite old and developed a few leaks. One day Ludek was rowing back and as he approached the dock, the kayak went under the dock and Ludek ended up on top. He didn't even bother to retrieve the kayak. According to Ludek, having a kayak and doing all the rowing is to be credited for developing his good physique. Too bad I did not have a kayak, but I also needed a good river to go along with it.

In the mid-30s before the war, the anti-Semitic feeling in Poland grew. It was more and more difficult for a Jew to hold a government job. It was also very difficult, and eventually impossible, for a Jew to get into medical school or into other sought after faculties at the Polish universities

Stefan, with his luck, got into the medical school but with great difficulty. He did get in only because of the “pull” that his Uncle Roman had as a superior court judge. Three years later when Ludek also tried to get into the medical school, he did not succeed on the first try. He took an extra year of agriculture before applying again. He did get in the next year on the second try. It was a miracle that he got into

medical school then. Of course his uncle Roman helped a lot. The year after Ludek was accepted, a law was passed called "Numerous Nullos," meaning that no more Jews were to be accepted at the universities, especially into the medical school. I know that my prospects as far as getting accepted into university were next to zero when my time would come. Any young Jews who wanted to attend university had to go abroad, like to France, Italy or England. But to be able to do that their parents had to have money. We weren't poor, but certainly I don't think my parents could afford to send me abroad to study. Ludek told me that while at the medical school the Jewish students were at times attacked by their classmates and had to defend themselves.

Before the start of WWII Stefan had finished his medical study and I believe had been working in a hospital, while Ludek finished only 2-3 years of his medical school and did not yet have a diploma.

As soon as the war started, Moniek's whole family went east with Ludek and Stefan (to escape the Germans), ending up in Lwow. Moniek and Frania came to Drohobycz to stay with us.

Aunt Mela (Sherman) and Uncle David Singer

Mela (Scherman) Singer, my aunt, was the only female Sherman that I knew before Irene was born. Mela was a very nice and elegant lady. Her demeanor suited her very well in her jobs. First she worked in the store with her father Henry, and after he died she took over the store. She was a pretty girl who had good judgment, as I remember my father would seek her advice at times.

She married a very nice man named David Singer. Felicia, Mela's mother, did not think he was good enough for Mela, as most mothers-in-law think about their sons-in-law. Nevertheless I think that David was a good man and devoted husband. He worked as a manufacturer's representative for some big oil company. I think it was Mobil Oil.

Mela and David lived with Mela's parents and in their later years took good care of them until their death. Felicia lived much longer than Henry, her husband. When WWII started she was too old to travel to escape the Germans. I think because of that, Mela, David and their son Ludwig decided to stay in Krakow with her, under the Germans occupation. Otherwise they could have come over to join us in Drohobycz, as did Maurice with his family.

David had a very gentile look and could have easily passed for a gentile during the German occupation. He was offered Aryan papers and probably could have survived, but he refused to leave Mela and his son Ludek. They all ended up in a concentration camp where they perished.

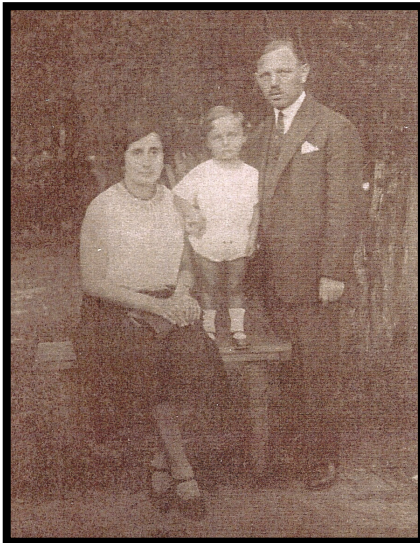
Mela's and David's son "little Ludek" Singer was a real prodigy; it was hard to tell what he would grow up to be. He had what we all thought to be an exceptional photographic memory. When he would come back from a walk with his nanny, he would sit down and draw what he saw. Sometime it would be a church or a building. The building was easily recognizable but it would sometimes contain some unrecognizable detail. The building could be one which has been seen daily by his parents without noticing the specific detail, until they went back and looked for it and then they would locate and recognize this very detail drawn by "little" Ludek.

Another example of his extraordinary gift is related to memory. In Poland each calendar day is dedicated by the church to a specific saint and some days can have more than one saint. For example, St. Joseph Day would always be celebrated on the same specific day every year. All men named Joseph would celebrate this day the same way we do birthdays. Birthdays do not have the same importance in Poland as they have here; there it is the "name-day" that is the important one. In a way it is easier for people to remember to wish their friends the very best on their name-day. One does not need to remember another person's actual birthday date. All you have to do is to look on a calendar and find out what saint's day it is today, and if you have a friend with the corresponding name as today's saint, congratulate him and wish him the best. They call it a "name-day." It may sound very complicated but in

real life it is simple, trust me. I hope you learned something new. As a result, if you look on a calendar in Poland you will see names of at least 365 saints. Ludwig, without any effort, would remember any day belonging to the specific saints or the reverse. I questioned him many times and I never could catch him to be wrong.



Ludek, "little" Ludek Singer, Mela and Stefan.
It is interesting for me to note how meticulously Stefan is dressed.



Mela, "little" Ludek, and David Singer

I liked my Uncle David Singer — he was fun to be with. I remember him making fun of the ladies saying goodbye. He would count with me how many times they would say goodbye before they actually left.

Unfortunately the last time we said goodbye to each other it was forever.

Chapter III
HITLER'S INSATIABLE DESIRE TO
RULE THE WORLD
"THOUSAND YEAR REICH"

In 1939, prior the start of the Second World War, the consensus in Poland was that a war between Poland and Germany was inevitable.

Hitler, after annexing Austria and later taking over Sudetenland (which was the western part of Czechoslovakia) without even a shot being fired, demanded that Poland give him a narrow strip of land called The Corridor. This piece of land gave Poland the only access to the sea (Baltic), and at the same time it separated Germany from Prussia. The Versailles Treaty (1918) granted Germany the right of free passage through The Corridor to Prussia and the city of Danzig (Gdansk) was made a Free City. For Hitler it was not good enough. He wanted it all. Hitler demanded that The Corridor and the city of Danzig (Gdansk) now be given to Germany.

We know now that in 1939 no country, including the United States, was prepared militarily for war, except for Germany. Even though the Versailles Treaty prohibited Germany from re-arming, Hitler did re-arm Germany. In hindsight, everybody now agrees that Hitler could and should have been stopped when he first annexed the Rhineland, and that way WWII could possibly have been avoided, with all its consequences.

Hitler first annexed Rhineland in March 1936, then Austria March 1938, Sudetenland September 1938 and, soon after, the rest of Czechoslovakia in March 1939. England and France came to the realization that any treaty with Hitler was not worth the paper that it was written on, and that Hitler's appetite could not be satisfied.

Again facing new demands by Hitler, Poland, England and France quickly (1939) signed a non-aggression pact, and mutual assistance

agreement with Poland, hoping to stop Hitler. They were also negotiating with the Soviet Union to sign a mutual non-aggression pact. However Hitler (Ribentrop) beat them to the punch by concluding a pact with Stalin in August 1939. Hitler and Stalin agreed in secret to divide Poland between themselves. Hitler made Stalin a better offer than the Allies. He gave him a part of Poland, for a while.

Poland, having then just concluded a treaty with England and France, was not willing to give in to Hitler's demands, so war became inevitable.



Europe just before WWII, on September 1, 1939

Our life in Drohobycz was a pleasant one, but certainly we could see dark clouds gathering on the horizon. To give you a taste of the atmosphere at the time in Poland, I recall vividly an incident that happened to my mother and I during one of our visits to Krakow in 1938.

One day my mother and I were sitting on one of the benches in a park and a small boy, 4-5 years old, came to talk to my mother. My mother

asked him what his name was and where he lived. He pointed out a tall building across from us. This was where a German Consulate was and he was probably the consul's son. He proudly told us that they have a large picture of Hitler at the consulate. My mother told him that when he goes back home he should spit on Hitler's picture. In that instant this nice little boy grew in our eyes to be a seven-foot tall man. He turned all red in his face and he threatened my mother that he would tell his father what my mother had told him to do. My mother got frighten so we got up from the bench and left, afraid that he might bring his father over. It shows how early Hitler's propaganda and the brainwashing started and how successful it was.

In Poland in 1939 people started preparing themselves for war with government encouragement by building shelters, buying gas masks and first aid supplies, and taping glass in the windows to prevent glass from falling out as result of explosions. The population was also instructed to cover windows so that no light could be seen from the outside at night.

My mother had a large metal container made to store food and to protect the food from poison gases, which we expected to be used during the war. I now doubt very much if a poison gas attack had occurred that this container would have protected the food. As a matter of fact, I doubt that anyone of us would have survived a gas attack. I suppose one has to do something to feel more secure. Nevertheless my mother's idea to have this container built and filled with food, like sugar, flour, etc., was great. It later helped us to survive for quite a few months.

People were right — Hitler attacked Poland on September 1, 1939.

Germany Attacks Poland — World War II Starts

In the wee hours of early morning September 1, 1939 we were awakened by a series of explosions. Going to the windows in our apartment we saw a number of planes buzzing around in the sky. We could also see black smoke in the distance. Those fires continued to burn for days. We immediately concluded that the war had started. My father turned on the radio (those days TV did not exist) and we learned that indeed Germany had attacked Poland.

When the war started we lived in the eastern part of Poland in the town of Drohobycz, having a population of about 35,000 at the time. In this area including the nearby town of Borislav (three to five km), there were then large oil deposits. The crude oil from a large number of oil wells was pumped first to big oil storage tanks, and from there later to one of the three refineries in Borislav.

Only ten days later the Germans entered Drohobycz. That was what they later called “blitzkrieg” (Lightning war). The German army, air force and navy were well prepared for war. The amazing thing was that they re-armed right in front of the whole world and no one objected, in spite of the Versailles Treaty (1918), which put strict limits on German military strength. The Allies started to re-arm themselves, but only after the war broke out.

The Germans, with their tanks and armored divisions, overpowered the antiquated Polish army with their horses. The Polish Army was not prepared for the “blitzkrieg.” The German Air Force, “Luftwaffe,” greatly outnumbered the Polish planes. The Germans also had the advantage of the element of surprise. In the very first day of the war they destroyed a great number of Polish planes just sitting on the runways. I may add that the same story later repeated itself with France, Belgium, the Netherlands and Denmark in 1940, where they all got caught flat-footed. I should also say that the Polish army, in spite of the inferior armament, fought very bravely and didn’t just run away.

The war did not go well for Poland, except around Warsaw where the army and local population defended itself for over 4 weeks. That was

quite a feat when one compares how quickly other large cities fell into German's hands later in the war.

The Polish army soon was in retreat. We began to see a number of cars with military officers and distinguished looking gentlemen heading towards the Romanian border (not far from Drohobycz) trying to escape the Germans. In the following days, hundreds of thousands of civilians clogged the roads also trying to escape the advancing Germans and at the same time hampering the military movements as the Polish Army tried to escape east.

My uncle Moniek with his wife Frania and my cousins Ludek and Stefan, escaped eastward. Moniek and Frania came to Drohobycz and stayed with us in our apartment for the next few years. Ludek and Stefan ended up in Lwow, then the largest city in the eastern part of Poland.

A few days after the war started, the Polish government advanced three-month's salary to all government employees. This proved to be a big help to those who got it. I remember my mother buying a lot of food to be stored in her new metal "gas-proof" container that she had made just before war started, and saving the rest of the money for future use. Certainly it all came in handy until my father was able to go back to work.

The Germans entered Drohobycz for the first time around September 10th, and on the 17th the Soviets declared war on Poland and the Red Army started to move into Poland from the East. There were no big battles between the Red Army and the Polish Army, which now had to fight on two fronts. They were not even a match for one of them, so more or less the Polish army gave up on the Russian front.

After the German Army entered Drohobycz everyone was very worried, particularly the Jews, as to what was going to happen.

The Germans put out all the oil fires that they caused with their bombs in the first place. They needed all the oil and gasoline they could get their hands on for their planned war efforts. Germany had no natural

oil deposits. They started to ship all the oil and its products back to Germany by any means available to them — tank cars, railroad cars, trucks, etc. We saw a continuous stream of empty tank cars lined up for miles to be filled up and a second stream of tank cars already filled with gasoline and other petroleum products heading back to Germany.

I remember one day towards the end of their stay in Borislav the Germans were in a hurry to open a storage tank containing gasoline. They used an ordinary hammer to open it instead of a brass one, which produced a spark and caused the huge tank to explode. A few Germans were killed, and nobody (myself included) felt sorry for them.

Borislav was the only place in the world where paraffin wax was found in the ground in a solid form that allowed for it to be mined. Normally paraffin is obtained as a byproduct from crude oil refining. The Germans took all the paraffin they could and organized another set of convoys of hundreds of trucks to take the paraffin from the warehouses to Germany. This plundering was going on day and night.

It is interesting to note since Germany did not have oil as one of their natural resource, which was needed for their war effort. They developed a process to manufacture gasoline from coal which they had in plenty. It was the synthetic gasoline that kept their later war efforts going.

The Germans knew that their days around Drohobycz were numbered. We did not. Just before the war started they agreed with the Soviet Union for the Soviets to take the eastern part of Poland and they themselves would take the western part. The non-aggression pact gave Hitler a green light to attack Poland without worrying what Soviet reaction might be.

France, England and Poland were all surprised by the signing of the non-aggression pact between Hitler and Stalin in August 1939.

The Germans knew before attacking Poland where the new border between them and the Soviets would run. The Germans purposefully

advanced farther East than the future borders were agreed upon. I guess they wanted all the oil they could steal.

The Soviets met no resistance from an already badly beaten and disorganized Polish Army. The Polish Army certainly could not fight on two fronts. Therefore, it didn't take long before the Soviets came face to face with the Germans. The Soviets pushed for the Germans to withdraw to the agreed borders, and the Germans tried to delay their departure for as long as they could. Finally the Germans had to leave Drohobycz, which took us from under Hitler's control and put us under Stalin.

The German soldiers then appeared to look more like they were vacationing; many of them riding bicycles with their sleeves rolled up with happy smiling faces. They looked quite harmless, but now we know that their looks were deceiving. Fortunately for us, after their short stay in Drohobycz and Borislav they withdraw back west. However, unfortunately they were back in less than two years.

I was fifteen years old when the war started.

Reflecting back now on the war times, as I must do while I am writing what I call my "Memoirs", I now realize that War to me was very close, personal, and I felt as if I was in the front trenches. Actually I was, because the enemy was all around me.

It might be a good place to mention that the eastern part of Poland after the war was annexed by the Soviet Union, and Poland was compensated for the lost territories by getting part of what was before the war the eastern part of Germany. Later in 1989 after the Perestroika, when the Ukraine became an independent country, the Ukraine kept a big part of what was before the war eastern Poland. This is how Drohobycz ended up in the Ukraine now.

Chapter IV

LIFE UNDER THE COMMUNIST SYSTEM

On September 22, 1939 the Soviets entered Drohobycz as the Germans pulled out in accordance with their mutual agreement. The Soviets remained in Drohobycz until July 1, 1941, 22 months in total, which for me worked out to be two full school years. When the Germans re-entered for the second time in July 1941, I was short one school year of getting my high school diploma.

The Red Army that we first saw in 1939 was well equipped as they moved west through Drohobycz — hundreds of tanks, trucks, artillery pieces, and poorly dressed Russian soldiers who took their positions on the new German–Soviet border.

Some of the Soviet troops remained in Drohobycz and soon after quite a number Russian civilians came to Drohobycz. There was quite a different atmosphere in the air than during the short German occupation. The Soviets tried to be friendly. That was the last thing that Germans had in mind. To them we were all inferior races, including the Poles and Ukrainians.

The Russians told us time and time again that in Russia they have plenty of everything. Meanwhile they were buying everything from the local stores and when asked why, the standard answer was “souvenirs” to send home. They were buying everything in sight — watches, cameras, suits, dresses for their wives, etc. Soon our stores were empty and, as we later found out, the real reason they were buying everything in sight was that in Russia they were short of everything. Not so in Moscow. There they were trying to show off to the outside world.

Soon after the Russians settled in Drohobycz, our life more or less returned to semi-normal. My father went back to teaching and I went back to school. Moniek and Frania Sherman lived with us in our

apartment. It was somewhat crowded, but in those days we were all happy to be together and alive.

My parents and I always lived in apartments. We, like most of the people we knew, never owned a home but lived in rented apartments. I never lived in a house, even a rented one, until Phyllis and I built one in Glens Falls in 1965.



Our apartment in Drohobycz. We lived on the second floor. (Picture taken in 1997)

Our life under the Soviet system was quite different than before. Now that we lived under communism, the economic system was very different from what we were used to. I can say it was crazy — our capitalist system operates on the principle of supply and demand — their system was a managed economy.

There was someone in Moscow who would decide when Drohobycz was going to get cigarettes and if they decided that we needed it, we would get railroad cars of cigarettes and tobacco. There would be nothing else but cigarettes and tobacco in the stores. And then we might not see cigarettes and tobacco again for a year or longer. Next time they would send us carloads of sugar, and you would see nothing but sugar in stores. First people would line up in queues to buy sugar since nobody had seen or had sugar for a long time. Eventually the queues would disappear and there would be shelves left full of sugar. After a while the sugar would disappear and you might not see it again for months. And this would repeat itself item for item. It would seem to us as though somebody would wake up in the morning in Moscow and decide what if anything Drohobycz would get on that day.

I remember one day we got a shipment of melons from Romania. People in Drohobycz hadn't seen melons for a long time so they would line up to buy them. After a while you could buy the melons without standing in a queue. After that it was that if you went to the store to buy something like bread, you also had to buy a melon. Nobody wanted any more melons so they were rotting on the store shelves. It was a crazy system. When you saw a queue in front of a store one would immediately get into the line and then one would try to find out what it was that they were selling. After that you decided to stay or not. It wasn't just like you could decide that you were going to buy a pair of shoes. You had to wait for the time that somebody in Moscow decided that Drohobycz needed shoes and they'd send thousands of pairs of shoes. Then you could buy shoes.

One day a shipment of porcelain dishes was delivered to one of the local government controlled stores. The receiving store reported a very large percentage of breakage, which was a lie. The reason for this lie was to allow the store personnel to sell the "damaged" dishes on a black market and pocket the money. Somehow the store learned that an inspector was coming to verify the damage, so the store personnel spent the whole night breaking the dishes to cover their lie. I suppose they must have had a good time doing this. This is an example of how the communist system worked.

There was no system for a store manager to call somebody in Moscow and tell them that he needs flour, sugar, cigarettes, etc. He did not have a telephone number to call. But even if he had one, there was no way for them to deliver the goods quickly to the store. There was no developed trucking system that would deliver the goods as needed. There were only railroads available for shipping commercial goods, so everything had to wait its turn.

First somebody had to decide that Drohobycz was a town and it's about time to send them something. It was a crazy system, which obviously finally had to fail as life became more complex and many different items had to be supplied. That system never would work, and it didn't.

People were standing in queues for hours and hours, for practically everything. Sometimes the police had to maintain order so that people who came late would not or could not cut in front of you. Of course, many of those incidents resulted in heated arguments. In the winter it was much harder to stand for hours and hours. Standing in those long queues with other people developed a sort of a social outlet. People made friends and discussed their problems with strangers. There must have been millions of hours absolutely wasted by all of us standing in those queues. The same story repeated itself from town to town. It is hard for me to understand how the Communists expected to succeed with this system.

Many years later, in the early 1960s, I visited a pump manufacturing company in Karhula, Finland that we were associated with. Those were the days of the "Cold War." During my visit, I noticed a number of Russian electric motors sitting on the factory floor. I asked my guide, "What are those Russian motors doing here?" His answer was, "That's a very good additional business for us. We are buying the motors from the Russians, then we are mounting those motors and pumps on pump bases. We're selling those motors back to the Russians at a profit." So I asked my guide, "Are the Russians crazy to buy back their motors and pay a premium?" His answer was, "Oh, no, they're after statistics. They like to show how much of their goods were exported from their

country, but they don't show how much they imported back." Since the communists didn't recognize the idea of "profit" and it was a dirty word for them, they tried to use "statistics" to motivate their people and to measure their success.

One would expect that people would be very unhappy with such a system, and complain. Not so. People were happy that after many hours of standing in a queue, they were lucky to be able to buy something even if the item did not quite fit. The choices were always very limited. The funny thing is that now, under our capitalistic system operating on the principal of supply and demand, some of our MBA's decided that the demand no longer counts. They decide now that we all should wear only large or extra large size clothing, because that lets them cut their inventory cost and allows the company to show a higher profit.

After a while some of us made friends with some shop clerks (very important persons), who worked for the state. They would let us know, sometimes in advance, what is going to be available in stores tomorrow, so that we can get there early and line up. Sometimes one would stay in a queue for hours and just before he would reach the counter, the item would no longer be available. Some of the merchandise would also end up on the black market as the shop-clerks had to make their living.

It was interesting to observe the national election process in the Soviet Union. The reason that I am bringing it up here is that prior to elections there was always plenty of everything in the stores. (I guess to make sure that people are happy and vote.) I do not know what difference that made to the communists as there was only one candidate to vote for. There was never any doubt who was going to be elected.

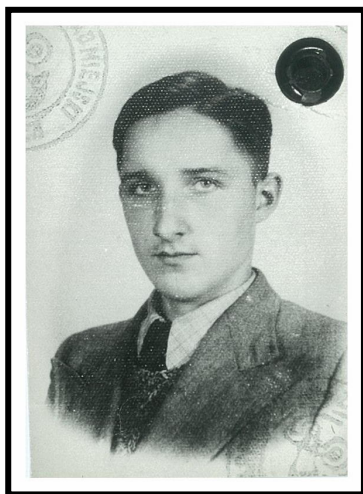
Another interesting thing about the elections was that the communist would make every effort to get everybody into the polling places, arrange transportation for sick people, etc. and the results were usually

99.0% of votes for the given candidate. I never understood why they tried so hard to get everyone to vote.

One had to develop his own “modus operandi” in order to live in the communist system. In the literal translation from Polish we all referred to it as doing things “on the left.”

The Soviet school curricula were quite different from the Polish ones. Let's start with the positive. It was co-educational. I approved of that. As for the negatives, we had to learn Russian, Ukrainian, Soviet Constitution and Communist History. I think I succeeded in not learning too much of the above subjects. Otherwise the schooling was good, with a lot of emphasis on math and physics.

We also had to learn how to sing Russian Communist songs. Mietek and I would sing in the choir, but we would sing different songs. Fortunately our voices were drowned out by others until the teacher, a nice Russian lady, caught on and threw us out of the class. I do not think she heard the actual words of the song we were singing, or we would have been thrown out of school. That was my last music lesson for rest of my life. Maybe this incident was what started Mietek's and my life-long friendship, but it certainly ended my singing career.



Mietek Lenartowicz
In his younger years

The Communist Propaganda Machine told us that we are all equal. There were no more aristocrats, no more big landowners or well to do people. We were all to address each other as Tovarish (Comrade). In practice, the members of the Communist Party were the elite or the new aristocracy. They had their own stores where they could buy practically everything. If one addressed one of them as "Tovarish," you would be told I'm not your "Tovarish." If one was smart he would address him as "Gospodin" (Sir).

Some of the old time Communists of the pre-war vintage became disenchanted with the Communist System as practiced. When they voiced their disappointment they soon found themselves in a Siberian labor camp along with their previous class enemies. Whereas the system did not discriminate based on religion or race, it did against the group of people who did not agree with the communist way of thinking. They became political enemies and they were sent either to Siberia or executed. They were called the enemy of the people. The Communist idea was if you are not with them you are against them.

Those of us who did not take advantage of the system — like working with the black market — were economically disadvantaged. At least we felt safe. If one did not participate actively against the system one would feel that nobody was going to kill them.

As I mentioned, during those days there were many shortages. One of them was a lack of soap. Mietek's father, Mietek and I decided that we could make soap. I do not recall whose idea it was, probably Mietek's father. I think if it was mine, I certainly would have remembered.

For making soap, one needs fat, salt and caustic soda. To make soap it requires boiling the fat in water with a proper amount of caustic soda, and then adding an ordinary salt (salting out). This causes the soap to float to the surface. If we had any trade secrets, I have by now forgotten. The material which floated to the top was the soap. We would pour the soap, then still in liquid state, into wooden forms, to let it cool and solidify.

The finished product was not “Chanel” but after we cut it into small blocks it was soap! And since there was nothing better available people were buying it. That was my first business lesson and it served me well later in life. It is good in business not to have strong competition.

Eventually we ran into shortages of fat and caustic soda. From reading a chemistry book I found out how to substitute for caustic soda by using lime and ordinary salt. Mietek’s father had good access to the supply of the animal fat from knowing the local butchers, but eventually we ran also into a shortage of animal fat. I tried again to learn from chemistry books how to convert oil into a solid state. I found out that there is a process that can do this. It requires percolating hydrogen through the oil under pressure in the presence of the catalyst. I tried to adopt this process to our local condition by substituting the hydrogen with natural gas. Since we did not have the proper catalyst or the ability to put this process under a pressure I tried without it. It should be no surprise that I had no success. Nevertheless, I think that I was lucky not to blow up the house or set it on fire.

Mietek, his mother and I would go to the flea market to sell our soap. We were making a good profit and we were supporting our families. By the way, later we ran into shortages of fat and we had to stop the production.

Looking back, it could be that this early encounter with chemistry helped me later to decide on my profession, chemical engineering, which turned out to be a good choice for me.

Ludek worked in the hospital in Drohobycz as a doctor. He made a number of good friends in Drohobycz. He was a young man with very pleasant manners, and he had a good time. I remember that sometimes he would take me along with him to a party or to the beach. One of his friends had a truck and he would take a bunch of us to go swimming, and we had some good times. We were not afraid for our lives, as was the case later.

In 1940 Ludek was only 22 years old, and it's interesting to note that he was already bald, at such a young age. I think this probably helped him in his early life, because he looked older than he really was, and therefore, he was able to get more responsible positions while still young. Ludek always had good judgment and good common sense.

I do not remember if we had any direct contact with our families who remained in Krakow. Krakow was then under the German control.

While all the things I have described were going on, in the economy, the political reality was that we lived in a police state.

During the Soviet occupation, the NKVD (secret police) deported many of the Polish intelligencia, former government officials, etc., that they had suspected were not sympathetic to them. They also deported some old time Communists who did not agree with the system as practiced. They considered them to be "Enemy of the People." The targeted people were former judges, policemen, army officers, government officials, and people whom they called "bourgeois." They would deport those people and their families to the labor camps in Siberia.

The NKVD would come at night, knock on the door, give the people a couple of hours to pack some suitcases, and put them on a train to Siberia. Some of the Jews who were deported were lucky because they survived the war by being in Siberian labor camps instead of being killed in Poland. (One of those people was Roman Hollander, Adam's father, who was a former judge, and as such was deported to Siberia Labor Camp and maybe was saved from being killed if he was in Poland.)

In June 1941 the Germans launched a surprise attack on the Soviets and after the Germans took over Drohobycz everything changed for us.

Mietek's father (he was a teacher like my father), for some unknown reason to us must have been on the NKVD "enemy list" and was

immediately arrested within hours after the German attack on Soviet Union. After his arrest Mrs. Lenartowicz asked us to take Mietek into our apartment, being afraid that her son would also be arrested like his father. Later on it is possible that she wanted to repay us for protecting Mietek, but she never mentioned it to us.

After the Soviets retreated from Drohobycz and the Germans came in, Mietek went to the NKVD building where he found many bodies of people who were arrested by the NKVD. He tried to find if his father's body might be there too, but without success. The Lenartowiczes never found out what happened to Mietek's father. For a long time they were hoping that maybe he was deported to Siberia and survived the war.

Chapter V

GERMANY ATTACKS SOVIET UNION

On June 22, 1941, the Germans launched a surprise attack on the Soviets. At first Stalin would not believe that the Germans attacked the Soviet Union. In spite of receiving previous warnings from the Allies that the Germans were planning to attack him, he paid no attention. He thought that the Allies were trying to create trouble between Hitler and him. The Allies, as we now know, had then broken the German code and so knew Hitler's plans. Stalin withheld orders for the Red Army to counterattack for a number of hours until he was finally convinced that it was for real.

Drohobycz was not very far from what I call the new "September/1939" German-Soviet border. So within two to three weeks after Germany attacked Russia in June 1941, the German Army entered Drohobycz for the second time since September 1939.

We expected that things would get much worse for us, but we could not imagine how bad things really would turn out to be.

We could possibly have escaped to Russia ahead of the retreating Red Army as some other people did. Most of those people saved themselves and returned back to Poland after the end of the War, unharmed, after suffering a lot of hardship during their years in Russia.

At the start of the war we thought that Russia was not as weak as Poland or France and that this time Hitler had miscalculated and bit off more than he could chew. We saw the Red Army as they entered Drohobych in 1939 with hundreds of tanks and artillery pieces. The Red Army looked impressive to us. Russia had about a three time's larger population than Germany. It took four more years, many nations participating and about 20 million people killed before Germany was finally beaten.

Soon after the Germans entered Drohobycz for the second time on June 30, 1941, they set up an administrative machine to control the occupied territories.

They set-up a Gestapo unit in Drohobycz. They in turn established Polish and Ukrainian police forces, each of them having their own chain of command, headquarters and uniforms.

Later as the war continued and as the things got worse for the Germans, they formed a Ukrainian Army, which fought alongside the Germans. Most of the Ukrainians were eager to cooperate with the Nazis — their behavior towards the Jews was even worse than the Nazis. The Ukrainians hoped to eventually get their own country as a reward for their cooperation.

One of the early Gestapo orders was for all Jews to wear a white armband with blue Star of David on their left arm at all times, to clearly distinguish them from the rest of the population. The Germans also forbade the Jews to walk on the sidewalk but only on the street like animals. The idea was for the rest of the population to view the Jews as something less than human.

In early 1942 the Gestapo ordered the Jews in Drohobycz to form an organization which they called “Judenrad.” It was to be a sort of a Jewish governing committee composed of a number of respected members of the Jewish community. The Germans would issue their orders and requests through this Judenrad for them to deal with the rest of the Jews. The Gestapo also ordered the Judenrad to set up a Jewish police unit, which wore special armbands, but no uniforms.

Life and death in Drohobycz under the Germans

Looking back, one can see how the Germans set up a big organization to kill millions of Jews, which they eventually succeeded in doing.

A few weeks later the Germans asked the Judenrad to supply them with a number of Jews to do some work. Those men were gathered in the City Center and one of them was my Uncle Maurice (father of Stefan and Ludek). The Gestapo loaded those men on the truck, and that was the last time that we saw anyone from that group alive or heard from them. Soon rumors started circulating that they were sent here or there but in fact, as we know now, those men were taken to the nearby forest, ordered to dig a ditch, and they were then shot and buried. From then on the Germans started killing the Jews en masse in Drohobycz, but we, the victims, did not yet accept this as a reality.

I got a job as a house painter through my high school friend whose father was a house painter. Of course my friend also got a job. Both of us worked together as two assistants for a number of real painters. We were assigned to the worst jobs, like sanding walls, doors and windows and all other dirty jobs. I learned how to walk around a room using a ladder, so I did not have to go up and down to move from one part of a room to the other to work or paint the ceiling.

The Germans took over a number of nice homes, which they wanted to be renovated and repainted, so we had plenty of work. There were advantages to being a painter. One of them was that we wore white overalls, which we splashed with different paints, to make the armband less noticeable. Another advantage we thought we had was an illusion that the Germans needed us, so they wouldn't kill us. Of course, that premise was all wrong. We know now the Gestapo never hesitated to kill a Jew because he was needed in their war efforts. Killing the Jews always took priority.

My father had no teaching job and the way we survived was by selling whatever we could from our household — our clothing, etc. We did barter with the farmers for food.

For first few months of Nazi occupation we lived in our old apartment. I remember one incident while we still lived there. Our apartment was located on the main street on the third floor. One day two young German soldiers from the Panzer Division, dressed in their all black

uniforms with their SS insignia, came up to our apartment and knocked on our door. My father opened the door and they asked him if he was a Jew. He said yes. They asked him to go with them. My father who spoke flawless German (as he was teaching it in school) gave them hell and told them he could have sons older than they were. He asked them to leave him alone, so they left sheepishly, empty-handed. I guess they expected to have some “fun.”

I’m not quite sure of the actual date when the Gestapo decided to separate the Jews from the rest of the population, by designating a small part of the city into which they ordered all Jews to move. That part of the city was then called the Ghetto. We had to move from our nice apartment and into a single room, which served for us as bedroom, kitchen, dining room, etc. Of course we had to leave most of our furniture and many other things behind us, since there was no room for them in a one-room apartment. We also left a lot of books behind. My father loved books. He had an extensive collection of Polish and German books — many of them dealing with art — and classic literature, possessions, furniture, etc.

Every time we moved there were cases and cases of them. I remember movers complaining that these cases were heavier than if they had been filled with rocks. My father also liked paintings. But my Mother did not approve of his expensive taste. Once my father had to return a painting that he had just bought. As I remember, it was a very nice painting — but nobody asked for my opinion. I think I inherited my father’s enjoyment of art. (So far Phyllis has not made me return any of the paintings — yet.)

My father also loved classical music and operas. I remember when we got our first radio (made by Phillips), my father would sit close to it listening to operas on the short waves coming from faraway places like Milan, Berlin or Vienna. He did not have much of a voice (like me), but he tried to help the singers as much as he could by singing along. Looking back, those were memorable evenings.

We were hungry all the time. We could not afford to buy enough food. I observed during the war-years that some people could tolerate hunger better than others. Some of the people would do anything for food; others could control their behavior. Probably different people feel the hunger differently. I remember seeing many people being swollen from hunger, especially their legs.

The Germans expected to conquer a great deal of Russian territory within a few weeks, as they did before with Poland and France and others. However this was not so easy, and the war between the Germans and the Soviets dragged on and the Germans kept advancing deeper and deeper into Russia. They got caught unprepared for the Russian winter when at the doorsteps of Moscow. That was the winter of 1941, which luckily for us turned out to be very hard.

The Germans ordered the Jews to turn in all their fur coats and skis under the threat of death. They also issued an order for all the population to turn in their radios and those failing to do so were also subject to the death penalty. After a while we stopped being afraid of all those death threats. We all got used to them. My father kept his radio because he wanted to hear the BBC. It is easy to understand why my father and the others were willing to risk death, since the voice of the BBC in those days was the only voice giving us hope and was a source of good news, real or not.

During the first year after Germany attacked Russia the fortunes of war went well for the Germans. They won many battles, captured hundreds of thousands of Russian prisoners and destroyed thousands of Russian tanks. As the Russian winter approached they found themselves just a few miles from Moscow. They could see it through their binoculars; they could almost touch it. The Nazis reached the outskirts of Moscow but the Soviets denied them the last few miles. Stalin, the Red Army and the civilian population dug their heels in. Stalin would not leave the city.

The Germans never occupied Moscow. That was as far as they got. During the first half of 1942 the German Army continued having a lot

of military successes. They won many big battles, captured many thousands of war prisoners, destroyed thousand of soviet tanks, and occupied more Soviet territories.

In the second half of 1942 the Germans in Drohobycz started a systematic killing of Jews. The Gestapo would bring special troops into the town — the SS Waffen. Those troops were basically Gestapo units reporting directly to Himler and they were primarily dedicated to hunting down Jews. They wore long coats, helmets and a large silver-plate on their chest. They were executioners who, in cooperation with the local German, Polish and Ukrainian police, rounded up Jews together with their families and loaded them into waiting railroad cattle cars to send them to the death-camps. Very few people escaped from those death camps to tell us what was really happening, but we had no illusions.

Sometimes we would get a warning that an “Action” was imminent. Having such warning, those who got it would try to hide in all sort of places. A number of times under those circumstances my parents would go into hiding with other neighbors including my Aunt Frania and Ludek.

Such hiding places were kept secret from everyone else, to prevent overcrowding, and there was always a danger that if the others got caught they could disclose our hiding place.

Sometimes the Gestapo would take some of the Jews from Drohobycz into a nearby forest (Bronicy Lasy) where they would order them to dig their own graves, strip down and then they would be shot right there. The SS Waffen troops would continuously travel from one town to the other to capture and kill Jews.

Our hiding place was in the cellar under a small wood shack near the place where we lived. One would not expect such a small shack to have a cellar. I was the one to camouflage the entrance to the cellar in the floor with cement by blending it in appearance with the rest of the floor so it would look like there was nothing there. The number of

times the shack was used as our hiding place was successful. I myself would go to work after camouflaging the entrance, believing that I would be safe working in a German's home as a painter.

However, one time while I was working at the Social Security Building, the Germans ordered all Jews from that building to gather in the central courtyard. I tried to stay behind, but one of the Ukrainian employees whom I knew ordered me to join the rest of the Jews in the courtyard.

Fortunately for me one of the Jewish men already in the courtyard motioned to me as I tried to enter the courtyard to scam, which I did. I turned around and slowly walked out of the gathering. I did not run in spite of the fact that I wanted to get away as fast as I could. After I got back into the building I hid in a basement with some other painters for the next few days.

Undoubtedly, this stranger saved my life. Those people from the courtyard were put on a train to concentration camps.

It was obvious from seeing what was happening around us that sooner or later we all would be killed. It was just a matter of survival until the next "Action." It is surprising that there were relatively few suicides. I know of only one or two families who committed suicide. I guess each individually thought that he would somehow survive or maybe we just wanted to live a little longer.

On November 19, 1942, which later was called "Black Thursday" in Drohobycz, 265 Jews were killed on the streets. One of them was my father. He went to town that morning and got caught on the street, not knowing that there was going to be an "Action" that day. My father would not obey the German's order and was shot on the spot.

I read in one of the books published after the war, *Drohobycz Drohobycz* by Henryk Grynberg, that my father spit in a German face. I do not know if it was true or not. He certainly was not willing to go to a concentration camp to suffer before being killed.

He was buried in the Jewish Cemetery in a common grave with the other Jews killed on that day. I wanted my father to be buried in a single grave, but I was persuaded that he should be buried in the common grave in accordance with an old Jewish tradition. It is a great honor to be buried in the common grave with a Torah, like the old fallen soldiers. He was laid down to rest, being the very first man in the grave, in a row with the others. I remember fixing the location of this grave in my mind by counting the number of columns in the cemetery wall. I guess I hoped I would be back.

While all the “Actions” were taking place and all the hunting of the Jews was going on in Drohobycz and elsewhere, a ferocious war was raging between the Germans and the Soviets on the Eastern Front.

Chapter VI

LIVING ON ARYAN PAPERS

In 1942 the situation for the Jews in Drohobycz was hopeless, as described in the previous chapter. There was no realistic chance for us to survive. We knew that it was only a matter of time before we all would be killed. One way to describe ourselves is that we felt like we were sitting on death row with no chance of parole, waiting for execution. I did not have to look far to see what was happening. My uncle Moniek was killed in late 1941 and my father was killed on a street in November 1942, both during German so called "Actions."

For one to have a chance of survival was to have or find a Christian family who would be willing and able to hide a Jewish family and assume the enormous risk connected with it. Some Jewish families who survived the Holocaust were able to arrange for hiding places either by having good Christian friends or by paying money.

Another way to try to survive was by using false Aryan papers. To have a chance for survival using Aryan papers one must not look Jewish and must speak flawless Polish without any trace of a Jewish accent or mannerism. It was a big help if one had what I would call a "starting point." This was a place where one could appear, out of the blue, using the new identity and have someone there to help him or her to settle in to the new surroundings. Obviously the new location had to be different from where they lived before and were known to be Jewish.

As far as the Aryan or Jewish looks are concerned, I think that each of us focuses on different features of another person for recognition. How many times one would say, doesn't he look like so and so? Isn't he a spitting image of so and so? And the other person may say, no, I don't see any resemblance at all, or agree.

In my high school class we had a pair of identical twins. Most of my classmates and our teachers could not tell them apart, particularly since they tried to confuse everybody by dressing alike, and sometimes

they would lie as to which one was which. I never had any trouble distinguishing between them. To me they looked quite different. This proves to me that we all must be focusing on different facial features. By the way, finally the teachers thought that they had a solution. They failed one of the twins, so they had to attend different classes, but this did not work for long as they kept on switching classes. Finally the war broke out and the school was closed and the problem with the twins was resolved. What I am trying to convey is that I may look like an Aryan (to 99 people out of hundred), but if only one thought that I looked Jewish and he was willing to share his suspicion with authorities, I would be a dead man.

Living on Aryan papers meant being exposed to constant scrutiny by all the people that we came in contact with, whether it was walking on the street, at work, when riding streetcars, trains, by neighbors who could suspect that the new neighbor might be a Jew. If one of them was willing to share his or her suspicion with authorities, that could be the end. There were also people who specialized in looking for Jews, either to blackmail the suspects or they would report them to the authorities if they did not receive whatever they wanted. With the men who were circumcised, as most Jewish men are, the suspicion could be quickly resolved.

Stefan was the first of the Shermans to escape on Aryan papers. His very good friend, Karol Lewalski, and Karol's fiancée came to Lwow, where Stefan lived at the time and they brought false Aryan papers for Stefan as Stefan Warski. I gather that those papers must have also included a medical diploma since he was able to practice medicine under his new name. According to Ludek's letter of May 28, 1945 to his uncle Roman Holender, Stefan was, with Karol's help, able to locate first in a small town in Poland. At the start he had a tough time there, but later he got a position as a doctor for a large lumber company. Stefan was not happy with this position and found himself a job as a family doctor for a well-to-do aristocratic family. Later on he decided to move to Krakow, which I think wasn't the smartest thing for him to do, as many people there knew him as a Sherman. He certainly had a lot of nerve and luck. He later went to Warsaw where he had a job as a

doctor for a Polish Health Organization, and he worked there until the Warsaw Uprising in 1944.



Stefan, Karol's fiancé and Karol Lewalski

After the war Stefan told me about one incident that happened to him while he was living on Aryan papers. One day he was accosted on the street by a Polish policeman who accused him of being Jewish. This, of course, Stefan denied. The policeman then asked Stefan to go with him to his police station. Stefan refused and told him if he wants to take him somewhere, then let's go to the Gestapo, and that was where they went.

At the Gestapo the German officer asked Stefan whether he was Jewish. Stefan said, "Of course not." Then the officer, without asking any more questions, asked Stefan to drop his pants, which Stefan did without any hesitation. The officer took a look at him and told him he could pull up his pants and told him that he could leave. The Gestapo officer told the Polish policeman not to waste his time anymore. We will never know what prompted the Gestapo man to let Stefan go, since Stefan was circumcised. Either he did not know what he was looking at, or maybe the officer was impressed with the nonchalance of Stefan and let him go. Or maybe for a moment the German decided to be human. Stefan always had nerves of steel and lots of luck.

While in Drohobycz, Ludek and I discussed our situation many times. What can we do to have a chance to survive? We thought that for us using "Aryan papers" was our best chance.

Seeing him make preparation to leave using Aryan papers encouraged me to think of doing the same. Ludek was then twenty-four years old and I was eighteen.

We were sad to see that my good friends, the Lenartowicz family, decided to leave Drohobycz in early 1942 for Radzyn Podlaski, a small town near the center of Poland close to the town of Lublin. While they were living in Drohobycz they were helping us as much as they could, and they also provided us with a link to the outside world while we were living in the ghetto.

Mrs. Lenartowicz decided to move to Radzyn for economical reasons. She had relatives there who were willing to help her and her children out. Mr. Lenartowicz, her husband, was arrested by the Soviets a few days before they pulled out of Drohobycz in 1941.

In late 1942 Ludek, and his mother Frania, decided to escape from Drohobycz as Catholics using names of Jan and Franciszka Warczewski. They first went to Radzyn Podlaski to where Mrs. Lenartowicz now lived. Radzyn was the first stop for Ludek and his mother. Franciszka remained in Radzyn for the next few months where she rented a room. Jan (Ludek) went on to Warsaw.

After the Lenartowiczes, and later Ludek and his mother left Drohobycz, my mother and I felt quite alone. In retrospect, what we at the time thought was a disaster for us, later proved to be actually Jan's, Franciszka's and my salvation. The Lenartowiczes gave us a place where we started our new life as Catholics under our false names.

For my mother and I trying to escape together, as did Ludek with his mother, had no chance of success. My mother, unlike Frania, looked Jewish, so I hesitated doing anything for a long time. Obviously I did

not want to leave my mother, and it is always easier to do nothing, particularly if one can find a good reason.

There were advantages and disadvantages for a mother and son being together. The obvious disadvantage was that if one of them got caught, the other would go down too. On the other hand, living together as a mother and son adds to legitimacy, by being a family it avoids many questions; such as where did I come from? And where is my family? I had no mother, no father, no sister, no uncles, etc. It is hard for anyone to believe that they are all dead, but after all it was the war that I blamed it on.

Nearly at the end of the war in Warsaw, it was tragic that after all the sufferings, Franciszka was killed during the "Warsaw Uprising" in an air raid by a German bomb in August 1944 only a few days before being liberated.

Ludek, while living and working under his Catholic name, had an incident that he later told me about. One day at work in Warsaw, the Gestapo came to his office, arrested him and took him back to their headquarters. At the Gestapo office the officer told him that he knows he is a Jew. Ludek tried to deny it, but the officer cut him short and said, "Don't give me that crap." He cut all the formalities and asked Jan (Ludek) how much money he had. Ludek showed him his wallet and the officer took it all. He next said, "Let me see your watch." Ludek showed him. The officer said, "Give it to me." Jan said, "I can't give you the watch. When I go back to the office without my watch the people of the office will notice it, and know that I bribed you." The officer said to Jan, "You are right. Now, I'll take you back." Ludek tried to tell the officer just to let him go, not being sure that he really would set him free. But the officer said, "Oh no, I'll take you back." Jan did not have much of a choice. The official put Jan in a Gestapo convertible car with the siren blasting and took him back to his office. That sort of triumphant return must have put a stamp of approval on Ludek that he must be OK. I think that someone at his office had denounced Ludek to the Gestapo.

Ludek, while working for a company named Te-Ha, advanced up the organization ladder. He was making lots of money for the corporation and for himself. He proved to be very good businessman, and should he have remained in business, I am sure he would have done very well. But his love was medicine and money did not matter to him. It is interesting and surprising to note that in the remaining months, Jan was not blackmailed by the Gestapo officer again. It must have been difficult for Jan to decide whether to run or stay. He decided to stay. A decision like this was a question of life or death, and in his case it also involved his mother.

Aleksander Lalicz

Before Ludek left Drohobycz, one day I met one of my high school classmates on the street, Aleksander Lalicz, a Catholic who asked me, "What are you waiting for? He told me, "You don't have a chance to survive — you better try to escape." So I answered, "Well, it's not that easy, I don't have any papers." Then he said, "Well, I'll give you half of my papers." Just like that! So he did give me half of his papers, which for me was a start. The rest of the papers, I had made for me by people who were busy those days fabricating such phony papers. I can tell you now the new identification papers were very crudely made. The official stamp looked as if it was cut out of a potato, which it probably was. Those phony papers would not stand up to any kind of scrutiny, but this was the best I could get. It had to do. Fortunately no one later wanted to see those papers, but they gave me a very much-needed sense of security. After all, I did have a few genuine Lalicz papers. As a sideline comment, I did not give any money or anything to the genuine Lalicz for his papers. I tried to find him in the nineties to see if he survived the war, but I could not find anything about his fate. He certainly played an instrumental role in saving my life. Many other people did too.

A few months later, after Mrs. Lenartowicz left Drohobycz, she came back from Radzyn. I do not know if she came back especially for me, or if she had some other matters to attend to. She insisted that I leave with her on the train. My mother also insisted that I try to save myself

and leave with Mrs. Lenartowicz. Of course for me, it was an extremely difficult and painful decision to make to leave my mother behind. But I made the decision, and I am alive today.

I left on the train with Mrs. Lenartowicz using false papers under my new name of Aleksander Lalicz, and I remember a sort of defining moment for me when I felt that I had burned the bridges behind me by taking my armband and flushing it down the train's toilet. On the train I pretended to have a toothache and hid my face. After arriving to Radzyn I stayed for the first few days with the Lenartowicz family. It must be realized that Mrs. Lenartowicz put herself and her children in great danger by letting me stay with them. She turned out to be like my second mother, and this close feeling stayed with us. I felt like her number one son. I remembered when I would play with Mietek or whatever the issue was, she would always take my side rather than Mietek's.

Mrs. Lenartowicz was more than an ordinary hero. Many heroic acts are committed on impulse, with not enough time for consideration of consequences of the heroic act: like a person jumping into a lake to save a drowning person, or a soldier falling on a grenade to save his comrades. Mrs. Lenartowicz lived in a real danger of being caught for helping me to survive, which she did for two full years. If she was caught, she and her two children were facing death by the Germans.



Mrs. Franciszka Lenartowicz



**Wanda Janina Lenartowicz
(daughter of Mrs. Lenartowicz)**

After arriving in Radzyn Podlaski I needed to find a job and a place to live. Radzyn, as I said before, was a small town. At the time when I arrived to Radzyn there was still a Jewish Ghetto there, which later was liquidated by the Germans.

In Radzyn there was a fairly large sawmill. I went there and asked for a job. They asked me what I could do. My answer was, "I'll do anything." So they gave me a job. I was glad that they didn't ask me too many questions.

I got a job at the sawmill as a manual laborer, sorting boards and stacking them up so they could dry. Soon after I found a place to stay. It was at a farmer's house, close to the sawmill. They were very nice people — not too nosy — and we all got along fine including his sons and daughter. It was a pleasant atmosphere, if one can think of those times as being pleasant. I felt as one of the family. I was scared inside all the time, but never showed it on the outside.

After a few months in Radzyn I got the only letter from my mother from Drohobycz. It was sent to Mrs. Lenartowicz's address telling me how happy she was that I was able to escape. She also said that she was working at the local roof-tile factory, and of course she wished me well. I must say that even now after so many years, I sort of choke up. It was not easy to leave my mother behind. Many years passed by, yet even today writing about this, still brings tears to my eyes. I still feel a sort of guilt about leaving my mother, even though I know that the Germans would soon have separated us, and we would have perished.

It is interesting and fortunate for me that my secret as to who I really was, was so deeply hidden in my mind that no matter what happened, I would not reveal the truth. At times I drank too much but I never revealed my secret. I thought I should be drinking with the rest of the people who drank very heavily in those days, to prove that I am one of them and I had nothing to hide.

As winter came I was told to go with a couple of other guys into the forest where the local farmers were cutting down the trees and then

hauling the logs out of the forest with their horses to the sawmill. I was the one who wrote the receipts for each log, giving its diameter and length on which basis the farmer later got paid. This was winter and cold. A driver from the sawmill took us in and out of the forest by horse and sleigh. I was quite happy to be in the forest. This way I had less opportunity to meet people.

The farmers would bribe us “successfully” by bringing booze. After we had a drink, the log got bigger. The booze was what we call here “moonshine.” They called it “bimber” — it was strong stuff. We could take it; it was cold, and we were young, so we were drinking the bimber and ate raw bacon. The bacon helped to line our stomachs and I think that probably the cold weather helped us to stay half-sober and perform our assignment.

There were no regular roads to travel in and out of the forest. The job of hauling logs out of forest could only be done in the winter. That was the only way they could drag the huge logs out on the snow. The rumors had it that a bunch of armed Jewish partisans were hiding in this forest, but we never saw any of them.

I was attending church every Sunday to be like the others. Again, here the Lenartowicz helped me by teaching me how to behave in a church, how to bless myself, how to use holy water and not to make any blunders which could give me away.

My next job at the sawmill was to classify the lumber by giving it grade number one, two or three, depending on the appearance. The lumber was beautiful. It came from old virgin forest. We could cut the planks two inches thick, a couple of feet wide, forty feet or so long, and they did not have a single knot. We called them “aircraft quality.” Most of the timber was either pine or oak. Some of the oak planks were 4” thick and up to three feet wide and about 20 feet long. The lumber was supposed to be shipped to Germany or east to help in the German’s war effort.

It might be interesting for you to know that, Poland used the decimal system — centimeter, meters, etc. However, when it came to the plank thickness, inches were used, which sometime caused confusion. I remember one Russian teacher in our school explaining that she was using the big centimeters and not the small ones, when ordering something. I do remember though that I thought it was funny at the time.

There was very little lumber designated for local consumption. The farmers who delivered grain or cattle to the Germans would get “lumber certificates” as a reward, allowing them to buy lumber to build homes or barns. The farmers who got the certificates were supposed only to be able to buy the lower grades, but since I was the one doing the grading, very little good stuff went to Germany. The farmers got the very best. We all tried our best to “help” in the war efforts.

The lumber certificates were hard to get. However there was one promoter (I think his name was Dubczek), who would come to the sawmill every so often from Warsaw bringing fake certificates, which he sold to the farmers. They all knew when he was coming. It was a little like a country fair. There was an excitement in the air. I still remember those certificates being orange in color with a diagonal green stripe. We all accepted them as genuine, without any questions.

Dubczek was very friendly with the management, the mill owner and practically with everybody, including me. We all liked him and we all got a piece of the action in the form of phony certificates. I did not see anything wrong with it that some of the lumber did not go to where it was supposed to go, i.e., to Germany or to the front but remained at home. I would not be surprised that some of the homes and barns standing today around Radzyn were built with the lumber that came from the fake certificates.

One day the Sawmill office asked me for my birth certificate. They needed it to get some identification papers and passes for all of us. Getting the birth certificate presented me with a problem — how do I get a birth certificate? Well, I guess I was always a little bit of a

gambler. I wrote to the Priest in Drohobycz asking him to send me a copy of my birth certificate (Aleksander Lalicz). My concern was he might know the real Aleksander Lalicz who might be currently attending his church. The Priest could easily ask the real Aleksander, why are you asking for a birth certificate to be sent to Radzyn? Certainly it could have created a problem for my namesake and for me. At the time, when I wrote the request, I was very concerned that this could give me away. But I didn't think I had a choice, so I took the chance. A few anxious weeks later, I got an "original" copy from the church and I was relieved and happy. During those years any official piece of paper with my name seemed to me to be very important.

On the basis of this birth certificate that I received, I got a couple of impressive looking German identification cards with the German Eagle and Swastika stamps.

While I was working at the Sawmill I became friendly with the Sawmill Manager, Mieczyslaw Schmidt (a little more about him later).

Sometime in late 1943 I started to feel uncomfortable in Radzyn and at the sawmill. I thought some people started looking at me in a sort of funny way and asking questions. I probably got too visible with my promotions and apparent coziness with the management. I guess I stopped being one of them as far the laborers were concerned — probably a mistake. Maybe I could have stayed in Radzyn the whole time and saved myself a lot of grief. Who knows?

There was one guy, a good customer of the sawmill, who was coming to the mill regularly. He offered me a job in his company, which I thought to be a building material warehouse near Warsaw. I believed that it might be a good way for me to disappear at the time. I took my suitcase and jumped on his truck and went. He also offered me a place to stay. As it turned out, it was a bad move.

His company was nothing, the job was nothing and the place where I was staying was a shack — cold without any heat. It did not make any sense to me as to why that guy hired me. The place was isolated from

everything and everybody. I thought it might be some kind of a trap, so I decided not to wait to find out. I left or escaped, whatever one wants to call it. I did not even say goodbye or thank you to this guy.

From there I went to a small town near Warsaw called Minsk Mazowiecki. I don't remember how I happened to choose it. I found a room there which I rented from a nice elderly couple. There was an electric train running frequently between Minsk and Warsaw, which was about 40 kilometers apart. It was sort of ironic, I found out it later, that the room that I rented was only a couple of houses down from the Gestapo.

I was commuting every working day to Warsaw, pretending to have a job so as to avoid questions, and at the same time I was looking carefully to find a job. In Warsaw, I would walk the streets at quite a brisk pace, pretending to go somewhere with a purpose and not just walking, or I would ride the streetcars. That was not the best thing for me to do in my situation — to be constantly exposed to new people, but I had no choice. Of course this would be even worse when riding the trains. Many times I would see and feel that somebody was looking at me, sort of staring. I thought that this person must suspect something, so I tried to look unconcerned, and not maintain eye contact with the person. I would continue to travel a few more stops and then I would get off on a busy intersection so as to mingle with other people to make it look as if there was nothing special in my behavior or so it didn't look like I was running away. I could not so easily get off the train — I had to ride it out or sweat it out.

Actually riding on the trains or streetcars was the most dangerous thing to do for Jews who were hiding on Aryan papers, since all the passengers were sort of fixed in place and had nothing better to do than stare at fellow passengers and wonder who they were.

There were also two other dangers lurking on the streets of Warsaw, but those applied equally to all Poles. One was that the Germans would grab a number of Poles at random off the street and shoot them as a reprisal for when the Polish underground organization would kill

one or more Germans. As a rule, the Gestapo, in retribution, would take 10 Poles for each German killed and shoot them right on the spot, against a nearby building wall. Afterwards one would get their name posted on placards all over the town.

Another danger was to be caught by the Germans as they from time to time were grabbing at random a number of young men from the streets. Those men were sent either to labor camps in Germany or to the Todt Organization, which was a German construction company building fortifications to help with their war efforts. My fear was the medical exam during which one had to strip. That would give me away. The two above risks came with the territory, meaning that this danger was faced by every young Pole, but they did not have to be afraid of the medical exam.

In Warsaw sometimes I would meet with Mietek, who lived and worked there at the time. Actually he worked for the same company that Jan (Ludek) did. It was not just by a coincidence. I would meet with Ludek very seldom for obvious reason, but I maintained contact through Mietek.

One day as I walked on the street with Mietek we decided to have a drink before lunch, and as we went down the steps into a small bar a couple of guys in civilian clothes and hats, with revolvers drawn pointing in our direction, came right behind us. They asked us to raise our hands. We listened. They frisked us thoroughly, asked a few questions and then left. Good thing we did not panic. As soon as they left, we had a couple of stiff drinks. I still remember saying to Mietek that if those guys came back and saw us celebrating they would take us in. To this day I don't know what we were suspected of — probably working for the underground or carrying guns, or something else.

It might be helpful for you, the readers, to know that during our individual struggles the war between the Germans and Russia kept going on with the fortunes of war changing. During most of 1942, the Germans were very victorious and won many battles and captured hundreds of thousands of Russian prisoners. The crucial battle raged in Stalingrad, for months. After the battle was over, about a million

Germans were killed and about a million and a half Russian soldiers were killed in that one battle alone. I read somewhere that the life expectancy of a new Soviet recruit was less than 24 hours. Finally, the Germans were defeated. From that time, which was in February 1944, the Germans started to lose most of their battles and had to retreat to Germany. Of course, that gave us hope that maybe we would be liberated by the Soviets before we would be killed by the Germans. I am absolutely convinced that sooner or later I would have been captured and killed. It was only a matter of time before my number would come up.

As the Germans started to lose the war against the Soviets and retreated west, the battlefield was getting closer to Minsk.

There was now a real hope for me that I might survive.

Reverse of Fortune for the Germans

After the big defeat that the German Army suffered in Stalingrad in February 1944 the Red Army was on attack and slowly kept advancing westward toward Germany.

In July of 1944, the Germans were in retreat on their Eastern Front with the Red Army in pursuit. At that time I, as Aleksander Lalicz, lived in Minsk Mazowiecki, a medium size town near Warsaw on the eastern side of the Vistula River.

There was a frequent electric train running between Minsk and Warsaw. I commuted to Warsaw daily, pretending to work in Warsaw. Ludek, then as Jan Warczewski, lived with his mother (Francia) in Warsaw on the western side of the Vistula River. He had a good job, working for a chemical supply company, Te-Ha.

The perceived “invincible” German Army was now in retreat. I want to tell you how much I enjoyed the sight. They looked like any beat up bunch of stragglers, marching not in any sort of military formation, some of them dragging their feet behind a horse driven buggy. It was

a beautiful sight for me. I still have a very vivid picture in my mind, after 60 years. I stood on Minsk's main street watching them pass by while hoping soon to be liberated.

I must have had a very happy expression on my face while watching the German Army retreating, since one of the German soldiers came up to me and said something in German. I understood that it would be wise for me to scam, which I did, and to enjoy the sight from a greater distance.

A few days later, the Germans had to withdraw from Minsk. Suddenly I saw a few Gestapo officers coming on foot towards the house where I lived. My first thought was that they were coming to get me! I had to make a quick decision to run or not to run. I decided that it was too late for me to escape so I stayed in my room. Later, I found out, they came only to say goodbye to my landlords telling them that they were leaving now, but they should not worry since they plan to be back. The Gestapo building was located only a couple of doors down the street from where I lived.

The German Army continued to retreat west to escape the pursuing Red Army. As a consequence, Minsk fell without much of a fight and it was now under Soviet control. However, somebody forgot to tell Moscow that they had already taken Minsk, because the next day a few Soviet planes swooped down and bombed their own troops in Minsk. They destroyed a few of their own tanks, which were hiding in the City Park. This is what we call today "friendly fire."

Soon after, the Germans started shelling Minsk with heavy artillery. This artillery bombardment caused a lot of damage. A few of the shells hit very close to where I lived. I wasn't concerned at all that I might be hit and killed by one of the shells. As a matter of fact, I remember thinking at the time, that now I had as equal a chance to be killed as anyone else. This thought was very comforting to me.

In spite of all the bombs and shells falling around us, I was happy and felt liberated. Now that the Germans were gone, I decided that I

should join the Polish Home Army to do my part. Maybe this decision saved my life. I will explain this later.

When I lived (A. Lalicz) in Radzyn Podlaski I came in contact with a few members of the Home Army. That was an underground organization fighting the Germans in occupied Poland. They took their orders from the London government in exile. The Home Army was similar to the French Resistance in their purpose. I thought then that I knew what the Home Army stood for and I joined their ranks. (If I knew then what they really were, I never would have joined.)

Soon after I joined the Home Army in early August of 1944, the Home Army staged an uprising in Warsaw against the Germans. (Their orders came from London and not from me.) The Polish Government in London thought that the AK (Home Army in Polish is Armia Krajowa) could liberate Warsaw from the retreating Germans a few days before the Soviet army was expected to enter the city. They thought they would beat the Soviets to the punch and establish themselves as the Polish Government in Warsaw and have a better negotiating position with the Soviets as to who would govern Poland.

Instead, Stalin stopped the Red Army about 20 kilometers short of Warsaw, letting the Germans deal with the AK. Stalin did not allow even the Allied planes to fly over Warsaw to drop arms and then land in the Ukraine. He ignored all the pleas from the Western Allies for assistance to the Polish insurgents. For him, the Polish Government in London was his enemy. Stalin had different plans.

Of course under those circumstances it was only a matter of time before the Germans would crush the Polish Uprising, which they did. As a punishment the Germans destroyed the city of Warsaw. About 90 percent of the buildings in Warsaw were destroyed.

It was during this Uprising that on September 8, 1944 a German bomb hit the house in which Frania was seeking a shelter and she was killed by the bomb.

After the Polish fighters surrendered, Ludek was deported from the City into a refugee camp. As a doctor there he risked his life, as he fought with the Germans in order to save and protect as many Polish fighters and civilians as he could. In many instances he was successful. I do not have many details from that period since I was then under the Soviet occupation and Ludek was under the German occupation. Later in October 1944 I was deported to the Soviet concentration camp in Borowicze and I did not make contact with Ludek until February 1946.

Chapter VII

FROM ONE PERIL INTO ANOTHER

Political Prisoner In Soviet Union

As if I did not suffer enough from the Germans in October 1944, NKVD (Soviet Secret Police) arrested me in Minsk for being a member of the Polish Home Army (AK). The Home Army was an underground organization controlled by Polish Government in exile in London. Stalin viewed the Polish government in exile in London as a Soviet enemy because they wanted a free Poland allied with the West, and he wanted to have Poland under his control.

The NKVD, on Stalin's orders, arrested people who they thought were their natural enemies such as the Polish intelligentsia, former army officers, policemen, judges, landowners, and members of Home Army. Some of the people were taken at random, maybe just for them to fill their quota. By arresting locals and deporting them to the Soviet Union they not only removed some of their enemies from Poland but also put fear into the remaining population. In the Soviets' mind we presented a threat to the establishment of Moscow's hand-picked Polish Communist Government trained in the Soviet Union. At that time the overwhelming majority of Poles were anti-Communists.

Later while we were in the concentration camp, some of us told stories about how we were taken in. In some cases the stories would be funny if not that the consequences were so tragic. In some cases a NKVD man would ask a person on a street to show him where such and such place is and, once there, or after a few blocks, he would arrest his guide and put him with us to make their quota, I guess.

In my case a couple of NKVD men came to where I lived in Minsk and asked me to go with them. They took me to a private house where a few men like me already milled around. I think that they must have gotten my name from some Home Army member roster. I thought that at this juncture the Home Army considered the Soviets to be their allies and not their enemy. The Home Army operated in the open, not

realizing what the Soviets had in store for them. Obviously the Home Army was naïve in starting the Warsaw uprising, without considering Soviet reaction.

While I was held in an empty private house in Minsk, the NKVD men told me that they would send me to an Polish army officer's school. I could have very easily escaped from this house as there was very little security, but I thought I would be drafted anyway. At least here I would become an officer.

A few days later, all of us held in that house were moved to a large open field fenced with barbed wire, guarded by many Soviet soldiers with rifles and bayonets. There were also many NKVD officers milling around outside of the fence. The congenial atmosphere that previously existed in the house changed. We were now prisoners. I learned later that the Soviets would never tell you the truth if they could tell you a lie.

Once inside the fence we did not know what to expect, but things did not look good. The NKVD gathered all of us from different locations so that from the few of us being held in the house, where we were held first, suddenly we became few hundred. Soon after we were all loaded into a waiting number of cattle railway cars. Those railway freight cars were modified and equipped to transport detainees for longer distances. Inside the railroad car they installed a small iron stove in the center. On each side of the car there were bare wooden bunks for sleeping and a latrine.

Soon after the train started to roll we started to speculate. Where were we being sent? The majority thought Siberia. A few hours later the train stopped in the middle of the night, and a little later we heard yelling, cursing and a voice of a man begging to spare his life. This drama took quite some time and I still can hear the voice of the man begging for his life. This incident left an impression on me for the rest of my life. We figured that someone tried to escape from another car and got caught. Soon after we heard a shot then silence and the train started rolling again.

It got cold. Some of the guys in our car started to break up the bunks and use the wood in the small iron stove to keep us warm. Otherwise probably we all would have frozen to death. We had no tools for breaking the planks, which were quite thick. Some of the guys were very handy, and for them it was not a problem to split those planks into small pieces using the stove door.

After we arrived at our destination, we learned a few weeks later that we were being held near the town of Borowicze, located a few hundred kilometers northeast from Moscow. In the Borowicze area, as we found out later, there were many other concentration camps holding Germans, Italians and of course Poles. From our camp we could see different prisoner columns marching to what we assumed to be different work places. We could see that there were many camps around us with many thousands of prisoners in them.

I think that the NKVD placed a number of concentration camps in one large district to create an unfriendly and frightening feeling amid the local population, to help prevent prisoners from trying to escape successfully. I guess that the local population was told that we all were Nazis. This, and the harsh terrain, made it impossible for anyone to escape. The locals would not help any escapees by giving them shelter or food. To the contrary, they reported any suspicious looking men to the authorities. There were many attempts of escape from our camp, none fully successful. Some of the escapees got past the barbed wire around the perimeter of the camp, and escaped the attention of the guards watching us day and night from tall watchtowers placed strategically around the perimeter. None of those escapees got all the way back to Poland. They only differed by the number of days they spent outside the camp, and how far they got before they were captured and put in solitary for quite some time.

At one time I was invited to join an escape group. The group got as far as obtaining a compass and some maps which were bartered from the Soviet guards. The idea was abandoned after we saw the failures of all the others, and I had to drop out anyway because of my frozen toe.

We were held in wooden barracks which had two levels of continuous bunks. There were thin mattresses filled literally with a few strands of straw. We slept fully dressed, side by side. I guess there must have been about 100–150 men in each barrack. Our second biggest problems after starving, were bed bugs and lice.

In order to escape the bed bugs during the summer, some of us would sleep on bare ground outside under some flimsy constructed shelters in all kinds of shapes and forms. At one time an inspection team came to see how we were being treated. One rumor was that they were from Moscow; others thought they were from the Red Cross. Not one of us actually spoke with them. But one of us overheard them asking what all those contraptions were for. The local commandant answered, “Those Poles are not civilized enough to live in houses. They like to sleep outside.” That took care of the question.

All of us, except the cook, were always very hungry, and from my experience that was all one could think about all day long. Our food ration consisted of 600 grams of bread per day, which is about two slices, and sometimes a spoon of sugar. We also got a bowl of soup, about a pint (1/2 liter), twice a day. The soup was just hot water with a few cabbage leaves floating in it plus sometimes they would also throw a few cans of the American or Argentinean pork into the big cooking pot. By the way, we used these empty cans to make ourselves containers to pour the soup in. Many times the soup had sand in it, which came from poorly washed cabbage or potatoes. There was quite a lot of stealing of food going on by the ones who were close to it, but that should be expected. The cook was fat. The rest of us were either very skinny or swollen from hunger.

Different people must feel hunger differently. I suppose it is the way we are made. I saw men who under normal circumstances were very honest and outstanding citizens, like judges, stealing food from others. Of course everyone traded whatever possession they managed to hide during a number of body searches and traded it for food. Hunger is probably related to the size of a person; the bigger one needs more food. But we all got the same rations. I suppose some

men must suffer pain when hungry. I did not have any pain, but the food was always on my mind.

When I got out of the concentration camp I weighted about 90 pounds, and I looked like the people from the German concentration camps.

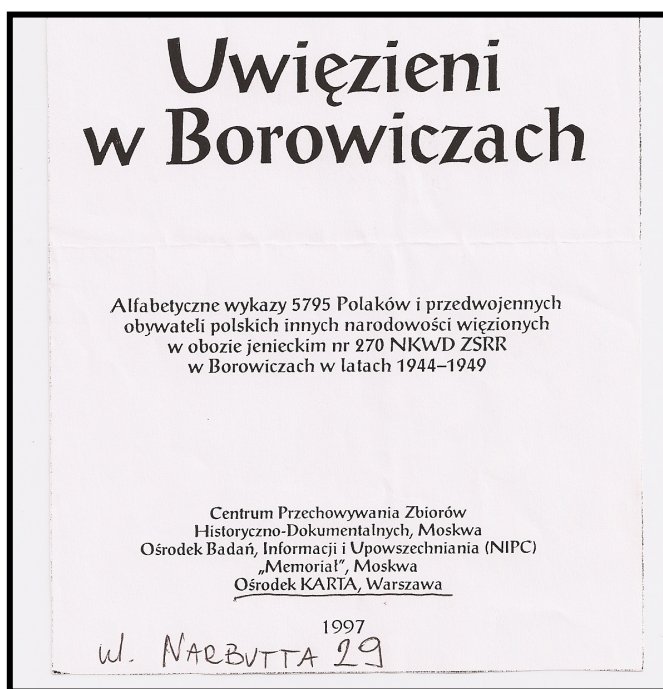
It might be a good place to point out that the guards watching us were just young boys, poorly clad and poorly fed, shivering from cold in the winter. Some of the soldiers were not even as tall as the riffles with the bayonets they carried. They were patrolling the camp along the barbwire fence and watching us from tall watchtowers, 24 hours a day. Sometime we would talk with them, sometimes we would tease them and sometimes we would barter. They were not mean to us, nor beat us. I do believe that they were only a little better off than we were. We eventually got out, but they were scheduled for many years of misery for most of their lives.

The Russian personnel in the camp, like a nurse or a doctor, tried to help but they had nothing to help with, no medicines. The only thing they had was potassium permanganate, which they used generously for everything. I know that from my own experience when I froze off my toe, which got infected (gangrene) and had to be cut off. Most of the people who died in the camp died either from diphtheria, dystrophy or hunger. In the camp that I was in, according to the figures I heard while there, we were about 5,000 men, and according to what I found just recently on the Internet, the figure was over 5,900 with 600 men dying. I heard in the camp that 1700 of us died during the 16 months. I suspect that the Internet figure might be more accurate.

A few years back, when I visited Warsaw, my friend Mietek Lenartowicz and I went to the government archives to see if we could find any information on his father Rudolf, who was arrested in Drohobycz in 1940 by the retreating NKVD and never from heard again. While I was waiting for Mietek to finish his search, I noticed a book on a shelf with the title BOROWICZE. I asked for permission to look at it, which I easily received. I started looking to see if I could find my name in it. I could

not. After a while it occurred to me why not. I was looking under the wrong name; I looked under Sherman, but while I was in Borowicze I used my Aryan name of Aleksander Lalicz. I started to look again for Lalicz and this time I found it.

The story does not end there. Along my name there were references to some of the NKVD files. When I got back to the States I wrote for copies of those files, and after some time I got them. They were very neatly handwritten in Russian. Those were files of my interrogations by the NKVD while I was in the concentration camp. As all the other prisoners I was interrogated by the NKVD many times. I found a Russian speaking person in Santa Barbara who translated the papers for me. No earthshaking revelations. Let's face it. I was a small fish and they realized it, but at the time I served their purpose. Since the book published contained names of persons interned in Borowicze concentration camps, their figures must be more accurate than mine were based on camp rumors.



“Prisoners in Borowiczach” is the title of the book containing 5,795 names of the prisoners held in the concentration camp during the years 1944 and 1949, which I found by chance in the Polish government archives in 1997 while in Warsaw.

Kwiatek Bronisław ur. 1909 o. Mikołaj C₁-461/p-182766; C₄-65-311-446; K₂-829; I₁-404; B Kwiatkowski Jan ur. 1920 o. Stanisław C₁-461/p-178740; C₄-65-311-447; K₂-465; B Kwiatkowski Marian ur. 1922 o. Wacław C₁-461/p-182765; C₄-195-45-5-276; K₃-846; I-6215; B Kwiatkowski Stefan ur. 1911 o. Dominik C₁-461/p-182538; C₄-65-280-444; K₁-1872; I-1541; B Kwiecień Lucjan ur. 1906 o. Teofil C₁-461/p-183563a; C₄-65-280-442; K₁-1298; B Kwiecień Stanisław ur. 1911 o. Wojciech R₁-56-5-1009; C₁-461/p-182530; C₄-65-280-443; K₁-962; B Kwietniewski Stanisław ur. 1917 o. Józef R₁-56-976; C₁-461/p-184805; C₄-195-45-5-274; K₃-592; P₁-96; I₁-456; B	Kwolek Stanisław ur. 1913 o. Józef R₁-57-1031; C₁-461/p-182769; C₄-65-311-444; K₂-410; I-21341; B Ladzik Jerzy ur. 1925 o. Henryk C₁-461/p-182815; C₄-65-284-5-636; K₁-1715; B Lajstowicz Jan ur. 1907 o. Stanisław R₁-54-5-873; C₁-461/p-182647; C₄-65-284-5-637; K₁-586; B C₁ o. Jakub Stanisław; C₄ Jakub Lalewicz Jan ur. 1902 o. Wojciech R₁-58-5-1122; C₁-461/p-182814; C₄-65-284-5-638; K₁-1713; I-2304; B C₁ ur. 1898 Lalicz Aleksander ur. 1925 o. Ilia C₁-461/p-182813; C₄-65-284-606; K₁-405; B C₄ ur. 1926 Lalka Bolesław ur. 1903 o. Wiktor C₁-461/p-182661; C₄-65-284-603; K₁-68; B	Lankamer Henryk ur. 1919 o. Michał C₁-461/p-182637; C₄-65-284-604; K₁-1450; B Laskowski Adolf ur. 1921 o. Stefan C₁-461/p-182811; C₄-65-284-5-639; K₁-1615; B Laskowski Jan ur. 1910 o. Wiktor C₁-461/p-184550; C₄-65-314-643; K₂-448; B Laskowski Marian ur. 1903 o. Franciszek C₁-461/p-182807; C₄-65-285-640; K₁-1915; B Laskowski Zdzisław ur. 1922 o. Marian C₁-461/p-182667; C₄-195-48-370; K₃-1123; B B o. Marcelli Laskowski Zygmunt ur. 1924 o. Stefan C₁-461/p-182809; C₄-195-49-394; K₃-401; B Laskus Czesław ur. 1906 o. Władysław C₁-461/p-182812; C₄-65-285-641; K₁-1186; I₁-364; B
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Names of the prisoners. Please note my name as Aleksander Lalicz.

I never will know if I was close to death in the camp or maybe I was saved by being in the camp instead being at the front fighting against the Germans and being killed on a battlefield.

While in the camp we were assigned to different work details. Some of them worked in nearby mines, which was tough. I was assigned to work on a collective farm. We decided that we would do as little as we could get away with. Our guard would go to sleep in a barn, while we in turn would post a sentry to watch that no one was coming to catch us doing nothing. We were supposed to run wheat through a threshing machine, but it was easier for us to run the threshing machine empty and make noise pretending to work.

In the camp we had at least two roll calls per day for different reasons. Maybe some purposely could drag on for hours. It was particularly painful in the winter. It was there that I got my toe frozen.

Chapter VIII

RETURN TO COMMUNIST POLAND

During the time we were held in the concentration camp in Soviet Union we were completely isolated from the outside world — no newspapers, no radio, no news of any kind, just rumors.

In 1944 there were two Polish governments: One was the Communist Government established earlier under the auspices of the Soviet Union which moved now from Moscow to Lublin, Poland. The second one was the government in exile in London with strong western leaning representing pre-war Poland. Poland's future was pretty much settled in February 1945 during the Yalta agreement.

One of the consequences of the conference in Yalta between the Western Allies and the Soviet Union was that the new Polish borders were agreed on were to the liking of Stalin. He got what he wanted as far as the Eastern Europe and post-war configuration was concerned. The exiled Polish Government in London (which controlled the Home Army) was kept completely in the dark about what was agreed to in Yalta. There was not even a Polish representative present during the Yalta conference. The Western Allies sold Poland down the river to the Soviets.

Apparently Franklin Roosevelt made a deal with Stalin in Yalta that after the victory in Europe if the Soviet Union would join the Americans in the war against Japan, the Soviets would be able to keep the Eastern European countries — Poland, Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia.

Our treatment by the NKVD in the concentration camp after the war ended did not significantly improve until we were actually let go. I think that the Soviet Union, at the time, was incapable of providing us with half-decent living conditions even if they wanted to, and I am not sure they did. They were exhausted from the war and they had very little of anything for themselves. I am not trying to defend the Soviets but I want to tell it as it was. Many of us died due to the terrible

conditions we lived in, but there was no planned systematic killing as it was with the Germans in their concentration camps, more appropriately called extermination camps. We suffered a lot, but I do not think that the Russian population was much better off except for the Party Members.

There were always many rumors flying in the camp, since we had no hard facts. We learned not to trust the Russians. I think they enjoyed telling lies because for them to tell the truth could be dangerous. The Russian personnel in the camp were always telling us, "Soon you will be going home," so after a while we paid no attention to what they had to say. It was more to us like saying, "How do you do?"

I do not remember exactly when we learned that the war in Europe was over, but it took some weeks for us to learn that it was. Of course we all were very happy about it, and we expected that we would soon be sent home. As months passed by and nothing happened, a gloom set into the camp. Keep in mind that the war had ended in the beginning of May in 1945 and many months later we still were held in the camp. We started to think that we would be held there for years to come. From the history we knew that the Russians who were sent to Siberia as punishment were held there for many years.

In February 1946 we were told we were being sent home. Many of us did not believe it. Some of us thought that maybe we were being relocated deeper into Siberia. We knew that if we were told one thing that it could not be true, so it must something else — but what was it?

A few days later we were loaded into a train similar to that which brought us to Borowicze (a bunch of cattle cars with bunks). We did not know for sure where they were taking us. We were hoping to go back to Poland, but there were many skeptics.

Several days later we arrived in Poland. It might be hard for you to believe, but a couple of the guys escaped from our train in Poland a night before we were released, not trusting the NKVD not to change their mind.

We arrived at Brest Mazowiecki, a small border town near the Polish–Soviet border. The next day the NKVD opened the sliding door of the freight car and let us out. I was then a walking skeleton — just skin and bones. I weighed about 90 lbs. See the picture.

The Polish authorities set up a number of tables outside the train where they issued us an identification piece of paper. We were dressed in old beat-up Russian army coats and caps, and we were hungry and weak. I had not even one cent in my pocket, not even a change of clothing. The total worth of all my possessions was zero.



The ID card given to all of us who were released from the train that brought us back from the Soviet Union.

Now I faced a question? Quo Vadis? Where should I go and what's my next move.

I could not go back to Drohobycz, because it was now part of the Soviet Union. The Polish border running from north to south was shifted west after the war by about 200 km. As the new borders were established, all the Poles who lived in Drohobycz or in the rest of the

eastern part of Poland, were ordered to move west. I had no idea where anybody who I knew in Drohobycz was or if they survived the war.

The shifting of Poland's borders west after the end of WWII caused literally millions of Polish families who lived in what was the eastern part of Poland before the war to move west. They had to abandon their old homes in the east and they were moved into abandoned German homes.

I had no money to buy a train ticket. I took a train to Warsaw without tickets. After all, what could the conductor do to me, throw me off of the train? So what, I would take the next one. I certainly was not in any rush. I wasn't even quite sure where I was going. I arrived in Warsaw without being thrown from the train. The conductor took one look at me and he knew that there was no point in asking me for my ticket, so he pretended that I did not exist. I knew some relatives of Mrs. Lenartowicz who lived in Warsaw, so I went there, to find out what happened to the Lenartowiczes. Luckily for me the relatives still lived there, and they gave me the current address of Mrs. Lenartowicz. She moved after the war, with her two children, to Poznan, which is a large city in the western part of Poland.

Again I hitchhiked on a train to Poznan. I just told the conductor that I had no money, and evidently, by my look, it was not hard to believe. He let me have a free ride. Good things started happening to me. I found the Lenartowiczes and also learned that Ludek was alive and that he was now living also in Poznan. He quickly came over to the Lenartowicz apartment. Each of us did not know if the other had survived. By then it was nine months after the war had ended.

I stayed in Mrs. Lenartowicz's apartment and she nursed me back to health. I could not start eating normally right a way. It probably would have killed me. After a few weeks I gradually started to feel human and gain weight. My memory was not as good as before. For all those months in camp, all my thoughts were only on one subject — food, food, food and nothing else.

Chapter IX

BACK IN SCHOOL

After I got back from Russia, regained some strength and put some meat on my bones, I thought that I should try to finish my high school education, which meant that I had to pass the matriculation exams. In Poland in those days having a matriculation diploma was important. This diploma opened a door to better jobs, and of course it was necessary to get into a university.

Now it was March 1946, fairly close to the end of the school year, and I was one year short of being able to get a high school diploma. I had already missed 6 years of school due to the war; I did not want to lose anymore years if I could help it. That meant that in the remaining 3 months I had to make up for the full school year.

I tried to enroll into a high school in Poznan, but the school administration would not accept me, saying it is too late in the school year. I told them that I am only asking for a chance to pass the exams and not for a diploma. I tried to explain to them that I had lost enough time, and I gave them the sad story of being held in the Soviet concentration camp. The answer was still no. I remembered that my father had a very good friend high up in the ministry of education. So I took a train to Warsaw, to see what he could do to help me. I was lucky, as this friend of my father, Roman Pollak, survived the war and was back in his high position. I went to see him at his office. He made a few calls, and after I got back to Poznan I had no trouble enrolling in the high school.

Now the really hard part started. I had to catch up on a whole year of schooling in just a few weeks. Then I had to pass two sets of exams in every subject before I could be allowed to try for the matriculation exam. The Matriculation Diploma required passing all exams in oral and written form in all subjects.

The oral exam took place in front of a panel consisting of a chairman and two teachers, with one of them being the examiner in the given subject.

To get ready for the exams I would not have enough time to copy all the notes that my classmates made during the previous months. So I arranged with some of my new friends to lend me their notes for a couple of days, when they were not going to use them. On some of the occasions one or two of them let me study with them. One was Jerzy Gotschalck (I think). His father was an electrical engineer and he owned a Lancia car. The car must have impressed me since I still remember the make.

One day we were studying physics at his house, and the subject was batteries. I think that it was about the nickel-cadmium battery. There was something that we did not understand about it. My friend suggested that we look in his father's library to find the answer. We found the answer in a book written in German by a university professor.

Now back to the exams. I passed the two preliminary exams allowing me to sit for the Matriculation Exam. During the oral part of my physics exam, as my luck should have it, I was asked about the nickel-cadmium battery in which by then I considered myself to be an expert.

My examining professor did not agree with my answer and he indicated that I failed the exam. It seems to me that he and I did not get along very well, previously.

I thought that I had not much to lose, so I went to the chairman and asked for permission to excuse myself for half of an hour to get a book to prove that I am right. My classmates tried to discourage me from going to the chairman, saying that he wouldn't give me the permission and the professor would fail me now for sure. I felt that my answer was correct, so I wasn't going to give up. Surprisingly, I got the permission to leave and get the book. I brought the book which was in German, written by a university professor in Prague, and it proved me

right. I knew then there was no way they could fail me. If I came late in the school year and still had time to look to outside sources for an answer, I felt it wouldn't be fair to fail me and they didn't.

DZIEKANAT WYDZIAŁU NAT.-FIZYKALNO-MATEMATYCZNEGO
Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego
w KRAKOWIE

ŚWIADECTWO DOJRZAŁOŚCI
LICEUM OGÓLNO SZKOLNICZEGO
Trzyletnie Szkoła Śmia. Ogólnokształcąca
Ustrojowa - Technikum
Lalier Aleksander
(nazwisko)

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powiatu Łódzkiego, wództwa łódzkiego
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łości według programu wydziału matematyczno-fizycznego przed Pań-
stwową Komisją Egzaminacyjną, powoł przez Kuratora Okręgu Szkolnego
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w Poznańskim Liceum im. Hęra
w Poznaniu

Świadectwo niniejsze uprawnia studiów w szkołach wyższych w myśl
art. 52 ustawy z dnia 11 marca 1932o ustroju szkolnictwa (Dz. U. R. P.
Nr 38, poz. 389) oraz rozporządzeń, anych w związku z wykonaniem tego
artykułu ustawy.

Poznań, dnia 2 czerwca 1946 r.

Nr 18

PRZEWODNICZĄCY
PAŃSTWOWEJ KOMISJI EGZAMINACYJNEJ:
M. Gładkowski
Ł. Wypycha
A. Jędrzejko
M. J. B. B. B. B.

PAŃSTWOWEJ KOMISJI EGZAMINACYJNEJ

PAŃSTWOWA KOMISJA EGZAMINACYJNA
Poznań

Matriculation Diploma
June 2, 1946

Living then in Poznan I decided one day to visit my former boss, the manager of the sawmill in Radzyn, (Mieczyslaw Schmidt). He moved to Sroda after the war. It was a small town near Poznan, where his family

owned a sort of “gentlemen’s” farm. We met and brought ourselves up to date about what happened to our mutual friends, acquaintances and each other after we left Radzyn. He discovered that I was not doing much of anything, so he offered me a job and a place to live (in his house), which I gladly accepted.

I never found out what my job really was supposed to be. That was a good thing, because looking back I must admit that then I did not know much about anything. Mr. Schmidt introduced me to all his friends. In this small town he was a big fish, as a local landowner, and of course there was a lot of socializing (drinking) in the evenings. As time passed by I became sort of a member of the family.

After a while I thought it might be a good idea for me to improve my social status. In Poland everybody had to have a title. All wives shared not only their husband’s name but also his title. It wasn’t Mrs. so and so, it was Mrs. Dr. so and so, etc. Phyllis would be addressed as Mrs. Engineer. For example, if one was a president of some charitable drive once in his life, he remained Mr. President for life, and you addressed him as Mr. President. And if one never had any job with a title, he was addressed as councilor, and so on. The highest title one achieved in his life was the one he held for rest of his life. Everybody was somebody.

Enrolling in the University of Poznan while I was “working” for my friend Schmidt (with his approval) gave me a nice social position as a university student. In order that studies would not place an undue burden on me, I chose to enroll into a Business Administration School, at the University of Poznan. I never passed even one exam (I did not try), but I found the books on the different subjects to be very interesting. I attended very few lectures, but I did not miss many social activities. I continued to live in Sroda and commuted occasionally to the University. I found a good compromise between not working too hard and not getting too much education.

At the time Mietek was studying agriculture at the University of Poznan, as was his sister Wanda. Ludek was also then living in Poznan

doing something, but I do not remember what. I know that he later moved to Lodz where he enrolled into the University in Lodz to finish his medical studies.

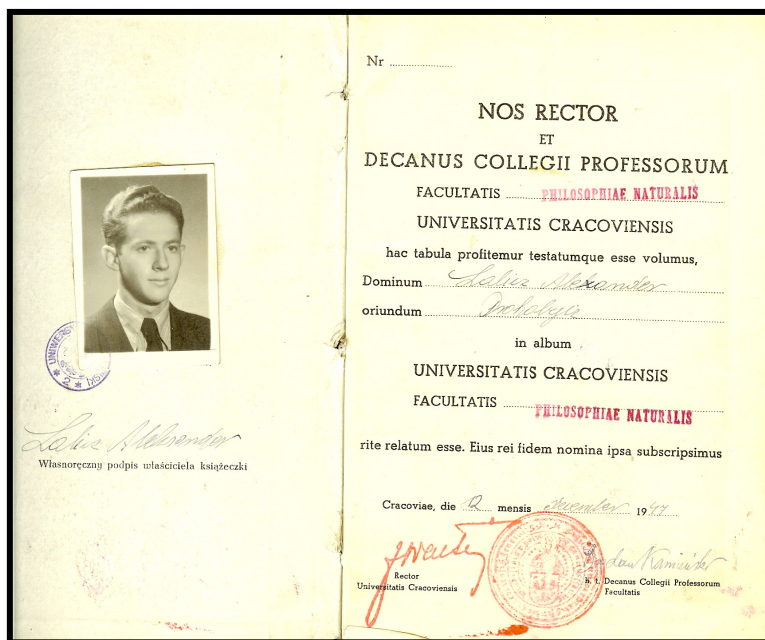
After about a year of this sort of a recovery, I decided enough is enough and it was time for me to choose a real profession. I decided on chemical engineering. I said goodbye to my good friend Schmidt and my other friends I made in Sroda, and went to Krakow.

It was difficult to get into to an engineering school. One first needed to pass a competitive entrance exam. I decided to apply for the admission to the Silesia Polytechnic in Gliwice, a town not too far from Krakow. This Polytechnic had a very good reputation as an engineering school in Poland.

I applied for admission to study chemical engineering (as Aleksander Lalicz). I was lucky to pass the entrance exam, but then was told by the Admitting Committee that I had to join the Communist Party in order to be accepted at the university. They explained to me that since they are paying for my education (the schooling was free, no tuition), they wanted to make sure that I and others like me were on their side — which meant joining the Party. My sentiments obviously were not pro-Communist. The idea did not appeal to me at all, particularly after my experience at the concentration camp. I told them, "Well, if I join now, then I'm not joining out of conviction, but I'm joining just to get into the engineering school." I said, "You would never trust me, so I won't join at this time. You let me in and I'll think about it." Anyway, they didn't buy my argument or they did not trust me that I would later join the Party. They did not explain themselves to me and said "No dice." I hate to speculate what would have happened if I had been accepted and continued my studies there.

So I went back to Krakow and enrolled in the University Jagielonsky. I opted to study mathematics and biology, just to be a student. There were not many students fighting to study those subjects, so I did not need to join the Party. I thought that it would be a good idea for me to have a legitimate occupation, and being a student was good enough. I

thought I might be still under some suspicion by the secret Polish police or the communist authorities after being held in the Soviet concentration camp. Anyway, I am sure they did not trust me — I know that I did not trust them. Poland was then a communist country run by communists.



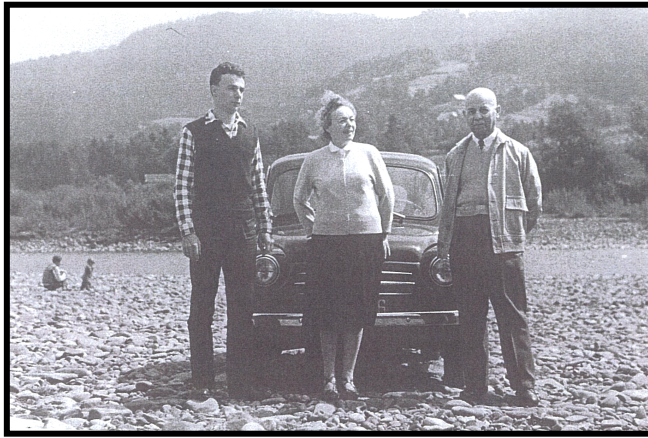
University Index

Each university student received a booklet in which all the subjects that he took during the given year were listed. The teaching professor would announce in advance that he would be signing the booklet (index) on such a such date, which indicated that the student attended at least one of his lectures. That would allow the student to schedule an exam at a mutually convenient time. See next page.

Uniwersytet Jagielloński			Rok akademicki 1947/48			
Wydział	Nazwisko uprowadzającego	Tytuł wykładowcy, ćwiczeń lub seminar.	Liczba godzin	Potwierdzenie zgłoszenia się studenta (nominalnie)	Pokazanie profesora (fotokopia, egzamin itp.)	Uwagi i potwierdzenie okresu naukowego
Matematyka	prof. dr. Dobrowolski	Fizyka I.	5			
	prof. dr. Wieruski	Analiza matematyczna I.	4			
	prof. dr. Wieruski	Ćwiczenia z analizy matematycznej I.	3			
	Dr. J. Szanki	Geometria analityczna	3			
	Dr. J. Szanki	Ćwiczenia z geom. analitycznej	3			
	Dr. O. S.B.	Algebra	3			
	Dr. O. S.B.	Ćwiczenia z algebry	2			
	prof. dr. E. Kunyńska	Chemia ogólna	5			

You can see from above that I attended few lectures.

In Krakow I stayed with the Holenders in their apartment — Roman Holender was Ludek's Uncle. Roman's wife Minka, his son Adam, and his mother-in-law Mrs. Mertz all lived in their old apartment, which they got back after spending four years in a Siberian concentration camp. Roman, after being released from the labor camp in Siberia, returned to Poland and got his old job back as a Superior Court Judge. I think that Roman's mother-in-law, Mrs. Mertz, was convinced that I was a bad influence on Adam, which probably was true, but after all he did not turn out all that bad. I stayed with them in Krakow until I left Poland.



**Adam, Minka, and Roman Holender
after they all returned from Russia**

At that time Stefan also lived in Krakow working in a hospital as a surgeon. Stefan could not stay cooped up in hospital all day. He had to get out for at least half an hour to a café (Mauritius in Krakow), the precursor of Starbucks, to have his coffee and cake. Stefan liked the good life and he had to have the best of everything.

We used to get together quite often. Stefan had his motorcycle (250cc BMW) so we would travel all over, like to the mountains in Zakopany from Krakow. We had a lot of fun — not too much worry, just being happy to be alive. Ludek also was in Krakow at the same time working in a hospital.

I remember one day we had a party at the hospital in which Stefan worked. We all got together, Stefan, Ludek, Adam, Stefan's fiancé Krysia and I. I do not think that we were ever all together again in one place since then. In those days there was not much entertainment available, so we had to organize our own. We would have one or two drinks to keep us happy. Stefan never had more than one drink. That evening Krysia, Stefan's fiancé at the time, and later his wife, baked a big cake which she left sitting on a chair. I probably had one drink too many and I sat on it. It was not my fault. A cake does not belong on a

chair. I was soon dispatched to take Adam home so he didn't see his cousins drunk. Those were good moments.



**Ludek and I
in Krakow, 1947**



Stefan and Krysia Sherman

I made friends with Stefan's friend, Karl Lewalski. We two would have dinner and a few drinks in different restaurants quite often. At times it got too late for me to go to my room at the Holander's apartment. I was afraid to wake them up, so I stayed in Karl's apartment.

Karl inherited a very nice villa from his parents. His father was a president of a large steel company in Poland. Karl rented the inherited villa to a Russian oil company and he himself lived in a very nice apartment (originally meant for the chauffeur) on top of a three-car garage, which also had a guest room. We had some very good times together in Krakow. Karl was instrumental in saving Stefan's life. Karl's mother was an Austrian, which allowed him to move to Vienna after the war.

Karl was engaged to a very nice girl for at least thirteen years and when he finally proposed, she said to him, "No thank you — you are proposing because you think that after all those years it is the right

thing for you to do.” Her decision was final and eventually Karl married a different girl.

He had a Ph. D. in economics, and when Phyllis and I visited Vienna in the 1970s he then worked for State Bank of Austria.

There was no future for me in Poland. I was still living under my assumed name. First, in order to succeed in Poland one had to join the communist party, which did not appeal to me at all. Secondly, being Jewish was an insurmountable handicap. And thirdly, there wasn't anyone left from my family to give me a reason to stay in Poland.

After being released from the Soviet concentration camp I continued to live as Aleksander Lalicz. Ludek and Stefan also continued to live under their respective Aryan names. This should give you an idea that we were afraid to start using our own true identities. I think that both Ludek and Stefan had their medical diplomas still in their Aryan names.

In spite of the above, it was not an easy decision for me to leave Poland. I did not speak any other language but Polish, I had little money, and no profession, but on the other hand I was young and not really afraid of what the future might bring. As far as I was concerned, nothing could be as bad as it had been.

I discussed us leaving Poland with Ludek many times. I do not remember who pushed whom to emigrate. I guess neither of us needed much pushing. Ludek was finishing his medical education at Lodz University at the time. We agreed that there was no future or good reason to stay in Poland. The question of where to go was not for us to decide. It was more of a question of who would accept us.

Ludek decided to stay in Poland long enough to get his medical diploma, but there was nothing to keep me there.

Chapter X

GIVING UP ON POLAND

I Love Paris

In 1947 when Ludek and I decided to leave Poland, we could not do it legally. The authorities wanted to draft me into the Polish Army. It was impossible for Ludek and I to obtain visas to travel anywhere. However, somehow I managed to get a set of false ID papers under the name of Michal Fajgenblat who was born in 1931. Those documents allowed me to leave Poland and to travel to what was then Palestine (Israel born in 1948). Those Faigenblat papers included a French visa. With those papers in hand, I took a train from Warsaw (December 1947) and one day later after passing through Polish, German and French passport controls, I arrived in Paris.



Imię *Michał*

Nazwisko *Fajgenblat*

Wiek *1931r.*

Gniazdo w *Wrocław*

Nazwa drużyny.....

Fajgenblat
Kierownik gniazda

bez
Drużynowy

Podpis właściciela

ymacji jest uprawniony do
elkich oznak harcerskich.

Druk. Państw.

Part of the Faigenblat ID papers I used to travel from Poland to France in 1947

I still remember the feeling when I arrived at the railway station in Paris, not knowing what I was going to do next. I felt like a very heavy weight was lifted from my shoulders. I was “free at last” and life was beautiful and I thought that the whole world belonged to me.

Paris is a beautiful city, as many people will agree. But to me after going through what I did during the Nazis and Soviets times, it was as close to heaven as I was going to get. I was very happy to be alive.

I did not speak any French or English. I decided that I should learn English, which would be necessary for me if and when I was able to immigrate to Australia, Canada, or United States. I took a Berlitz course in English in Paris. I thought I would learn French just by living in France and by going to the movies. At the beginning I did not understand anything that was said in the movies, so I made up my own story from what I saw. When I compared my story with Ludek’s who spoke and understood French, I thought my plot was more interesting.



My I.D. Card from Berlitz School to prove to you that I have learned my English.

My life in Paris turned out to be very pleasant. I did not want to waste my money on food; I thought I'd eat later in life. Sometimes I would go to a restaurant, and since I didn't know any French, I pointed to an item on the menu. Nine times out of ten I would pick fish, which I didn't particularly care for. When I was ready to leave, I would ask the waiter for a bill and he would rattle off the amount in French, which I did not understand. So I would try to carry large bills, like 100 francs, 500 francs, and I would give him a bill and if it looked as if he expected more, I gave him another bill. I don't think that I was ever taken advantage of. Sometimes in the evening I would go to a nightclub, where champagne was "obligatoire" in lieu of buying a ticket. I saw some risqué shows and enjoyed them. During the days I would walk and walk in Paris for many, many miles. The city of Paris must be the most beautiful city in the world.

Sometimes I would go to the Opera to get some culture. I would buy a standing ticket, very inexpensive, which meant that I could not sit down. I stood behind the last row, but I heard the same music as the people in front sitting down. During the intermission I could buy myself a glass of champagne and mingle with "society." You probably can tell I was impressed. The old Opera House is now closed and one can only visit it as a sightseer. Paris now has a new modern Opera House and it is not nearly as nice as the old one.



Ludek and I in front of the Paris Opera

With those Fajgenblad papers which I got in Poland, I was supposed to continue to travel to Israel. But that did not appeal to me. I decided I would like to stay in France and wait for Ludek and then we would see where we would go. We decided to stick together as there was not much of our family left.

In France I kept two identities, not knowing which one might be useful in the future. Would it be Ignacy Sherman or Michal Fajgenblat, who, in his papers was a few years younger? This later made it possible for me to emigrate to Canada. I abandoned my Lalicz name, which had served me well. It let me survive.

Le récépissé ne saurait, en aucun cas, tenir lieu de pièce d'identité.

RÉPUBLIQUE FRANÇAISE

76E5569 0003

RÉCÉPISSÉ
DE DEMANDE DE CARTE D'IDENTITÉ
ou de renouvellement de la carte N°

Cachet.

Délivré à M. (1) *SHERMAN Ignacy*
né le *18.5.1924* à *Stanislawow*
de nationalité *Polonaise*
résidant à *Paris 18^e*
rue *16. Rue Lamarck*
Profession :

Le présent récépissé, tenant lieu de permis de séjour, est valable
jusqu'au *27.9.1948* (un mois au maximum).
A *Paris*, le *27.6.1948*

Taxe versée : *100*
N° du reçu :
Date de la poste :
Pén. ☒
Non ☐
Nun. ☐
Date :

Tout étranger qui, sans avoir de domicile sans esprit de retour (ou quittant la France dans les mêmes conditions) devra, avant son départ, faire viser son récépissé par le Commissaire de police (ou, à son défaut, par le Maire).
Dans les 48 heures de son arrivée au lieu de son nouveau domicile (ou de son retour éventuel en France), l'étranger devra également faire viser son récépissé par le Commissaire de police (ou, à défaut, par le Maire).
L'étranger qui négligera de se conformer à ces prescriptions sera passible des peines prévues par l'article 47, § 15, du Code pénal.
(1) Nom et prénoms. Pour les femmes mariées, mentionner le nom de jeune fille après celui du mari.

100 FRANCS

Timbre de la Mairie ou du Commissariat

DOMICILE INTERDIT
Dans les Départements du Haut-Rhin, du Bas-Rhin, de la Moselle et des Alpes-Maritimes

My French ID as Sherman

N° 32.

POLICE D'ÉTAT DE
SEINE-ET-MARNE
COMMISSARIAT
DE LA CIRCONSCRIPTION DE
CHELLES

M/H

PREFECTURE DE
SEINE & MARNE

Service des
Etrangers

AUTORISATION PROVISOIRE
DE SEJOUR

Signature du titulaire :

Fajgenblat Michel N. FAJGENBLAT *Michel*
né le 10 octobre 1931 à Suzha (Pologne)
de nationalité d'origine Polonoise
demeurant à CHELLES H. Rue St. Hubert
est autorisé à résider jusqu'au 16 Mai 1948.



A CHELLES le 16 FEV 1948
Le Préfet,
Le Commissaire de Police

*Provisi au 16 Janv. 48.
Chelles le 11. 48.
P. Le Commissaire de Police
Emmiquem*

*Provisi au 16 Mars 1948
Chelles le 16/3/48.
P. Le Commissaire de Police
Emmiquem*

*Provisi au 16 Avr. 48.
Chelles le 16/4/48.
P. Le Commissaire de Police
Emmiquem*

My French ID as Fajgenblat
Temporary permit allowing me to stay in France
Please note all the impressive official stamps that I always admire.

Before I left Poland I took out a Polish passport in my Sherman name. I thought that it might be useful for me to have. Later when this passport validity expired, I tried to have it renewed. I went to the Polish Consulate in Paris to have it extended, but they told me I had to go back to Warsaw to have it renewed. I am not that stupid! The Polish Consulate kept my old passport, but not me.

KONSULAT GENERALNY POLSKI
W PARYŻU

CONSULAT GÉNÉRAL DE POLOGNE
A PARIS

Nr 50141/2/P

W sprawie SHERMAN Ignacy
Objet

PARYŻ, dn. 25 JUIN 1948
PARIS, le

Konto pocztowe: Nr 855-39 Paris
Compte Chèques Postaux: Nr 855-39 Paris
31, RUE JEAN GOUJON (VIII)

KONSULAT GENERALNY
R.P. w PARYŻU
Nr 6452
T.O.K. POZ.
POBIANO

CERTIFICAT

Le Consulat Général de Pologne à Paris certifie par les présentes que Monsieur SHERMAN Ignacy né le 16-5-1924 à STANISLAWOW (Pologne), demeurant à Paris (16) 16 rue Lamarck, a remis en dépôt son certificat de nationalité nr. Adm. s.ob.2740/47 délivré le 12-VI-1947 par les Autorités compétentes à Cracovie (Pologne) jusqu'au moment, où l'enquête administrative sur sa nationalité aura été terminée auprès des Autorités compétentes en Pologne.

Le présent certificat est délivré pour servir et valoir ce que de droit.

Le Chef du Consulat Général,

JAN SUKIENI
CONSUL

Przy odwołaniu należy wskazać niniejszy numer placu.
Przy odwołaniu należy wskazać niniejszy numer placu.
Przy odwołaniu należy wskazać niniejszy numer placu.

JD/DM

A receipt from the Polish Consulate in Paris for my Passport that they took away.

I realize that since those war times, I have acquired the habit of keeping official looking ID papers. I think that this habit of mine came from surviving by using and depending on false Christian papers.

The more ID papers the better, was my motto. Later in my life I ended up working for the paper industry. I wonder if there is any connection between the two.

I remember feeling safer during my “Lalicz” times when I got some German passes. They were impressive looking with big stamps of the German Eagles from the German Police in connection with me working in the sawmill. One of the passes allowed me to walk past the curfew time. The other I do not remember. As matter of fact, I would never walk past the curfew time. That would attract unwanted attention, but if I had been stopped on some other occasion, those impressive looking ID cards could have hopefully prevented any more questions.

I was waiting for Ludek to come to join me in Paris. Finally the day arrived when I went to meet Ludek at the railway station in Strasbourg, France. He was part of a group of young people which was supposed to continue on to Palestine. We did some fast maneuvering to separate him from the group and we both ended up on a train going to Paris. I remember we went into a dining car — very elegant, black leather, mirrors, white tablecloth and all — and we had a nice lunch, including aperitifs. We celebrated the beginning of our new life.

In Paris, Ludek stayed in a small hotel named Alesia for the entire time he was there. The proprietors of this small hotel took a liking to him and treated him as if he was their son, but he still had to pay the rent — typically French.

Ludek had his medical diploma but he could not practice as a doctor in France. Luckily for him he took French in high school (I took German), and it was very useful now. Ludek was able to work at the Pasteur Institute but he could not earn any money. This was OK with him, and the fact that he was not paid for his work at the Institute did not diminish his diligence or enthusiasm. The only thing he got for his

work at the Institute was free lunch with wine. He worked at the Pasteur Institute for about one year.

I discovered that ordinary wine in Paris was cheaper than coffee, so every morning I had a half a bottle of wine “vin ordinaire” for breakfast. Every second day I would go to a grocery store to fill up my bottle with white wine from a big barrel for one franc (equivalent to a quarter of a dollar then). This wine was called “vin ordinaire” and it was the cheapest wine one could buy, but it was a good wine. The grocer would choose it very carefully when buying a few hundred gallons at the time for his store. If he made a mistake he would have to drink it all himself, so he was very careful with his selection. I had not yet then developed a taste for good wine. It took me another 50 years, and I am still learning. As my good friend Bjarne told me just a few years ago, “Now we can no longer afford to drink cheap wine.” I am trying to follow his advice.

A half a bottle of white wine in the morning does change one’s outlook on life — some of the aggressiveness in people disappears. I noticed that the people in Paris were more polite to each other, and kissed each other for any occasion. It was like looking at the world through rose-colored glasses. I think that it may be a good idea to make it mandatory for all New York City residents to have half a bottle of wine at breakfast. It would be cheaper than fighting all that crime.

Ludek and I came to the conclusion that it was impractical for us to think about staying in France. It was very difficult to get a work permit and to become a French citizen — one had to live there for 20 years. At that time 20 years seemed like an eternity. The French were very kind to people like us who were displaced persons, but they had no intention of letting us stay and become French. Not much has changed since then. However, I will always be grateful to the French for giving us shelter while others did not.

Ludek contacted his high school friend, Leszek Wroblewski, who was then living in Paris. Leszek spent his wartime in France and he joined the French Resistance, which later gave him many, many privileges. Ludek told me that Leszek graduated at the top of his law class in

Poland, but he never practiced law. After the war Leszek wanted to see Europe, so he got himself a job as a travel guide and traveled throughout Europe while he was being paid. He also had a better time than the tourists he was taking care of. He lived in a very fashionable apartment in old Paris. I think the apartment was a little older than Paris itself, but that was and still is in style. I think the address was 15 Rue Visconti in Quartie Latin. I remember the concierge looking at everyone coming in with a suspicious eye. All concierges in Paris work very closely with the French police. At all times Leszek kept a case of champagne under his bed in his apartment, which was available to us.

I met Leszek again in the 1980s in Paris. He remained a character. Phyllis and I visited him in his new apartment, which was also located in the old section of Paris. I remember his apartment had three floors, with the kitchen on the bottom floor, so his poor wife had to go up and down serving us dinner. He also had a summer place outside near Versailles and drove an old Jaguar. Leszek also had a parking permit allowing him to park anywhere in Paris as a totally disabled veteran (there was nothing wrong with him as far as I could tell). At that time he worked in one of the French banks, doing quite well. He discovered the secret of how to live well without working too hard. Unfortunately he did not share it with rest of us.



Top row Leszek Wroblewski and I, next to me and next to Ludek Henry Jassem, the rest unknown, somewhere outside Paris.



Ludek Sherman in Paris in 1948

I decided to enroll at the Sorbone University hoping that my French would get better. Being a university student has a good ring to it when one is asked his occupation. With all the different schools and universities I attended, I don't think I became overeducated.



The Sorbone recognized my Matriculation Certificate allowing me to enroll into the Sorbone University.

Ludek and I started looking seriously into emigration possibilities, Ludek knew of some relatives we had in Australia by the name of Leibler (diamond importers), so we wrote a letter to them explaining our situation and we asked for help. Their answer was very

encouraging — they told us that they would try to obtain Landing Permits for both of us and act as our sponsors. We were very happy to hear their response. Obtaining the Landing Permits would allow us to immigrate to Australia. I should mention that in those times when millions of displaced persons were searching for a country where they could settle, it wasn't easy to obtain an Immigration visa.

More or less concurrently (I do not remember the exact timing) Ludek learned that there was a scholarship available for a medical doctor from the Lady Davis Foundation in Canada to do medical research at the University of Montreal. Ludek applied for it. I believe that Ludek got a letter of recommendation from the Institute Director, Pasteur Valerie Radot (for whom he worked in Paris), who was well connected politically and scientifically.

In August 1948 we received a telegram from our cousins in Melbourne, Australia informing us that Ludek and I were granted Landing Permits allowing us to immigrate to Australia. We were very happy that soon we would be able to start a new life. We were ready to sail to Australia (down under) and say "au revoir Paris."

A. S. LEIBLER & CO.
DIAMOND IMPORTERS

ANTWERP
LONDON
MELBOURNE
NEW YORK

TELEGRAPHIC ADDRESS:
DIAMABLE, MELBOURNE.

TELEPHONE: CENTRAL 4698

QUEENSLAND NATIONAL BANK BLDG.
281 COLLINS STREET,
MELBOURNE, C.I.
P.O. BOX 30177 G.P.O. MELBOURNE.

16th August, 1948

Dear Cousins,

I enclose herewith two Landing Permits which I obtained for you today. I offer you my congratulations and hope that you will be able to come out very soon to this country. I also sent you today the following cable:-

"BOTH PERMITS GRANTED STOP
AIRMAILING ORIGINALS TODAY".

Should I be able to assist you with some advice for your departure from France then I shall do so with pleasure. Please cable the exact date for your departure, either by plane or by ship. This will enable me to await you on your arrival.

With kind regards,

Your cousin,



Leibler's letter

C.6555 V46/4053
COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA.

Form No. 41.

Permit **C** **6555**

DEPARTMENT OF IMMIGRATION,
MELBOURNE, Victoria.

This Permit is valid
until 11th August, 1950.

11th August, 1948.

LANDING PERMIT.

THIS IS TO CERTIFY that authority has been granted for the admission into Australia of
Ignez SHERMAN residing in France accompanied by
his wife and children, whose particulars and photographs appear hereon.

This authority has been granted subject to the following conditions:—

- the bearer is in possession of a valid Polish Passport or Certificate of Identity duly
visaed (if not issued) by an Australian or other British Consular or Passport Officer and bearing copy of his/her
photograph;
- the person or persons included in this Permit are of good character, in sound health and shall produce to the Consular
or Passport Officer to whom application is made for a visa, a satisfactory medical certificate on the attached
Form No. 47A and evidence of good character;

NOTE: The bearer will be admitted to Australia
under exemption from the provisions of the Immigration Act, 1901-1940 for a period of two years.

This permit is issued subject to the condition
also that the grantee/s produce/s to the Australian or
other British Consular or Passport Officer to whom applica-
tion is made for a visa for Australia a certificate of
negative x-ray chest examination from a qualified medical
practitioner. The film/s on which such certificate is based
must be produced to the Immigration Authorities on arrival
in Australia.

Transmitted per: Mr. Abraham Samuel Leibler,
16 Howitt Road,
CAULFIELD. S.E.7.
Victoria.

By authority of the
Minister for Immigration.

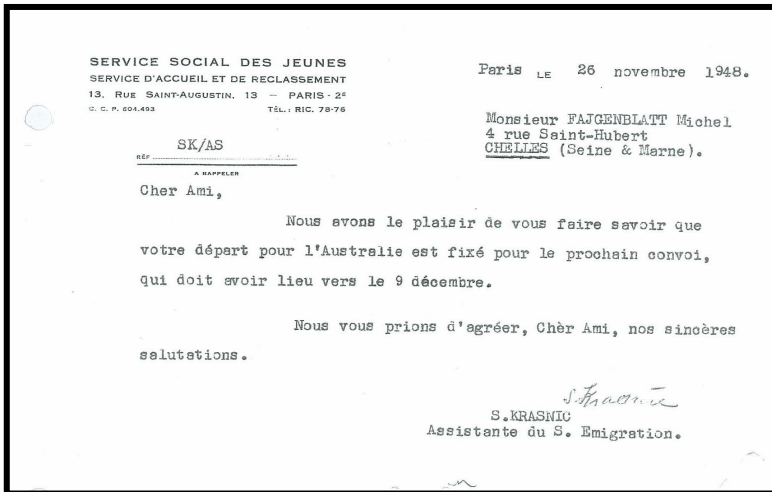
PARTICULARS AND PHOTOGRAPHS OF PERSONS WHOSE ADMISSION HAS BEEN AUTHORIZED.

Grantee: Full Name	Ignez SHERMAN
Age	24 years.
Nationality	Polish.
Height	5 feet 7 inches.
Colour of eyes	Blue.
Colour of hair	Fair.
Special peculiarities	Nil.
Wife: Full Name	---
Age	---
Children: Names.	---
Sex.	---
Age.	---



Australian Landing Permit

Things progressed to the point that in late November of 1948 I was informed that I was scheduled to sail for Australia on December 9th. Again I was going to be there first, ready to greet Ludek on his arrival in Australia.



A notice advising me that my ship is scheduled to depart to Australia on December 9, 1948

We knew very little about Australia. The population was then about eight million and the ratio of girls to men was not in our favor. So we were happy but we had some reservations. Looking on our situation realistically we did not have much choice, so Australia here we come!

A few weeks later Ludek learned that he was successful in winning the scholarship from the Lady Davis Foundation in Canada. I think that Ludek, who worked diligently with no pay and liking it at the Institute, was eventually rewarded by receiving the letter of recommendation, which probably tipped the scale in Ludek's favor in getting the fellowship.

Now we had a choice: Canada or Australia. It was a good situation for us to be in since not so long ago no country wanted to take us in. Australia was a long way from Paris. We thought that once we got to Australia we would never come back to Europe. We decided on Canada.

We wrote a very nice thank you letter to our "cousins" Leiblers thanking them for all their work in getting the papers for us and explained our

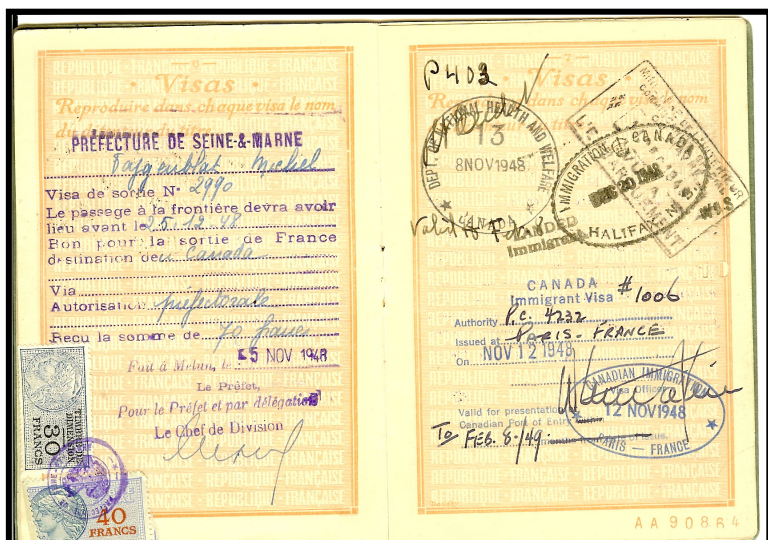
reasons for going to Canada. In turn we got a nice letter from them understanding our decision and wishing us luck. I am forever very grateful to the Leiblers, whom I never met, for the Landing Permits we never used. It was like someone threw you a life preserver.

Ludek had “clear sailing” for Montreal, Canada — he was going to get the necessary papers through the Foundation to immigrate to Canada. I had to scramble and switch the direction where I was going. Once I knew that Ludek got the fellowship and we decided to go to Canada, I started working on getting myself into Canada.

As you note Ignaz Sherman was going to Australia. Now I used my Michel Fajgenblat identity papers, which served me well before, in getting me from Poland to Paris, and now they helped me to travel from Paris to Canada.



Since people like me did not have passports, the French authorities created traveling documents which substituted for passports where different exit and immigration Visas were stamped in.



Grand Prize — finally I received Canadian Immigration Visa and permission to leave France.

I arrived in Canada before Ludek did. In December 1948, I traveled from Paris to Le Havre from where I took a ship to Halifax. Once again, I was able to act as a one-man welcoming committee to greet Ludek as he arrived in Montreal a few months later.

(TOURIST THIRD CLASS)

IMMIGRATION IDENTIFICATION CARD

THIS CARD MUST BE SHOWN TO THE EXAMINING OFFICER AT PORT OF ARRIVAL

Name of passenger... FAIDENISLATT Michel

Name of ship... SCYTHIA

Name appears on Return, sheet... Michel

Medical Examination Stamp

Civil Examination Stamp

LANDED Immigrant

DEC 20 1948

HALIFAX, N.S.

MIS

(See back)

**Immigration ID
I became a Landed Immigrant**

Chapter XI

STARTING A NEW LIFE IN CANADA

Joe Rubin

Soon after arriving in Montreal, I found a job assembling milkshake-making machines. I was one of the 40 to 50 guys on the floor and I was earning \$15.00/week. What I did not like about the job was the loud music blaring at me for 8 hours. Everybody else liked it, but I didn't. I decided to try to get another job. I started by walking on the streets and looking at different businesses. One store caught my eye. It was a business displaying typewriters, adding machines, and other office equipment. I walked into the store and asked to see the boss. After only a short time in Canada, I already learned that the "boss" is the boss. The boss, Mr. Joe Rubin, came out from his office and asked me what he could do for me. I said that I was looking for a job. After a few questions — i.e., where do I work now? and why I want to leave? — he asked me what I could do. My answer was, "Anything you ask me to do." He hired me starting the next Monday. My starting salary was to be \$16 per week. I went back and I quit my old job. To my surprise, the manager tried to talk me into staying. I do not understand why. So far I had not contributed anything worthwhile to his business, but it flattered me that he asked me to stay. I said "No thank you."

On Monday morning I showed up at National Typewriter and was sent to the service department. I suspect that the manager of the service department was not told that I was hired, so he quickly had to find something for me to do. I do not think I was hired because they needed somebody, but only because Mr. Rubin probably took a liking to me. The first job I got was adjusting spring tensions on the typewriter keys so they would all have the same feel. I did not have much luck with it. Some of the tensions ended too tight, some too loose. I guess I just didn't have the touch for it. Fortunately for me a job opened up for a dispatcher in another section of the service department.



**Mr. Joe Rubin, my friend
and mentor**

National Typewriter had about 4,000 typewriters and adding machines on service contracts with different businesses in Montreal. Anytime a problem developed with one of those machines, including changing the typewriter ribbons, the secretaries would call us.

We had about 15 service men throughout different parts of the city and there were three of us in the office as dispatchers. One dispatcher was a fellow by the name of Rene Viger. Our job was to take the calls from the customers, and when a service man called for his next assignment, we would give him the name and address where he had to go next – simple enough. But for me, it wasn't so simple. My English was very limited, and all the businesses, corporate names and streets were unfamiliar to me. When it was my turn to take a call I tried to get at least one thing right, because I did not want to keep asking our customers to repeat the same thing too many times.

Fortunately Rene had a fantastic memory. He remembered every serial number of the machines we had on contract – addresses and telephone

numbers of all of our customers, and if I got one thing right he would fill in the rest and bail me out. I would have been lost without him.

Out of necessity, I came up with a few simplifications of the methods used in dispatching that earned me a few “Brownie Points.” My starting salary was \$16 per week, but after a few weeks I went to see Mr. Rubin and asked him for a raise. Now I was earning \$17 or \$18, I don’t quite remember exactly how much. This pilgrimage repeated itself every few weeks. I remember when my salary reached the low \$20’s, and Mr. Rubin asked me how long the raise would last this time. I said, “I can’t tell. Living in Canada is very expensive.” I imagine he must have laughed inside when he heard my answer.

I heard the rumor that my immediate boss, the service manager, Jerry Rudner, was making a hundred dollars a week. I could not imagine how he could possibly spend this kind of money. In the meantime, once I earned over \$20 per week, I started to feel rich. I could buy myself what I needed now, without saving for it for months. If I needed a pair of shoes or a tie, I just bought it. Just like a millionaire. Later in life, as I was making more and more money, I started feeling poorer and poorer. I guess my appetite kept increasing faster than my income.

All went well. Mr. Rubin took a liking to me and invited me to his home and soon I became like a member of his family.

I started to realize that without higher education I couldn’t get very far. All I had finished was high school. I decided to try to go to the University — once again a student!

I remember that both of my parents, in their different ways, tried to shape my character and my future when we were still leading a normal life. My mother instilled in me the importance to have compassion for other people, which has remained with me for the rest of my life. She made me think about the consequences of my actions on others. For example, when later in my life I was supposed to fire someone for his or her misdeed, I would not do it easily. I would think twice of the

hardship on their families. My mother's ambition was for me to become a doctor—medicine was never appealing to me. My father was always saying that there is nowhere written that I had to be a doctor, engineer or lawyer. As far as he was concerned, as long as I was an honest man he would be just as happy for me to be a shoemaker or a tailor. I still do not know if he meant what he was saying, but I did not want to be a shoemaker, so I tried to get a better education.

I was lucky. I got accepted at McGill into their Chemical Engineering Department. Mr. Rubin offered to pay my tuition, which I politely declined. He asked me, "How come when you worked for me you asked me for a raise every few weeks?" I said to him, "That was different — I thought I was worth it." I did work for National Typewriter over the weekends and during my college vacation. Mr. and Mrs. Rubin became better and better friends over time.

While I was working at National Typewriter, Ludek was doing his research at the University of Montreal on the scholarship he received from the Lady Davis Foundation. We rented a room close to the University of Montreal, (French speaking).

It was a little difficult to live together in one room. Ludek was neat and I was more "artistic." Socks and etc., all over the floor belonged to me. We mutually accused each other of sneaking into the fridge at night and eating jam by the spoonful. Ludek introduced the very first system of splitting things evenly. One of us would divide say a cake for example, and the other one had the right to choose first. You can be sure the portions were absolutely even.

Ludek was very diligent and hard working while doing his research. He would get up almost every night, even in the winter (it can get cold in Montreal), and walk a few hundred steps up to his laboratory to attend to his guinea pigs.

My first year at McGill was actually taught not in Montreal but at Dawson College located outside Montreal in a small town, Saint John, in military barracks left from WWII times. The McGill University in

Montreal could not handle the extra students who all wanted to get higher education after the war.

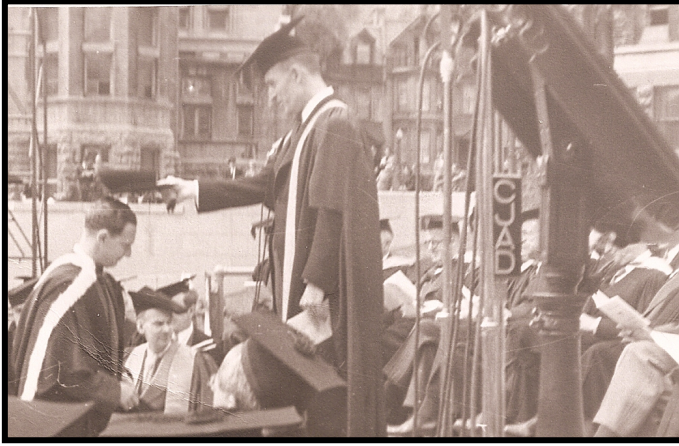
We all lived in barracks, about 8–10 in a room. That was good for me because I had to speak English at all times. We studied, played and ate together. I made some good friends during those times. Living together with my classmates 24/7 helped me to make the transition from a European to a Canadian, which I wanted to become.

The Rubins were some of the finest people I had ever met in my life. They always knew to do the right thing. They had very fine social graces, and they not only gave money to charitable organizations, but also gave of their time and talent. Later, when I got married, Phyllis of course met the Rubins, and Mrs. Rubin took Phyllis under her wing. I remember Mrs. Rubin teaching Phyllis how to handle a husband. She would buy herself an expensive hat and Joe would get a new tie so he didn't feel neglected. I also remember Mrs. Rubin had a Jaguar and I suspect that later in life Phyllis took her example and also had a Jaguar. So I can say that Mrs. Rubin's teaching did not go to waste.

I went on to graduate in Chemical Engineering in 1953, and later made my living in the pulp and paper industry where I had a lot of success and fun, and also managed to make a lot of friends.



Our luxurious accommodations at Dawson College; I had a lower bunk.



Commencement ceremony, showing me receiving my engineering degree

After I finished my studies Mr. Rubin tried to talk me into coming back to National Typewriter. I decided against it, seeing no future for me in a family-run business with a young son waiting in the wings. In time the decision proved to be the right one. A few years later, when the father turned the business over to his son, he himself was moved completely aside. Eventually National Typewriter disappeared from existence. I guess the son did not manage to handle the changes in technology.

Mr. and Mrs. Rubin remained good friends for life.

Inger (Jensen) Sherman

Arriving in Halifax in December was not as nice as arriving in Paris. The Atlantic crossing was rough, as it normally is that time of the year. By today's standards, the Cunard Line's ship, *Scyntia*, was small, only 20,000 tons, and the waves were 40-feet high. Most of the passengers were seasick, but not me. The dining room was practically empty. The waiters seemed happy to be able to serve food to somebody who enjoyed it. Those days I didn't worry about my waistline, and the food was great, even though I did not travel first class, at that time. I remember that my quarters were on the very bottom of the ship. I wasn't spoiled then. But it was an enjoyable trip, full of hope and expectations. I met a nice Dutch couple on the ship

who, like me, were immigrating to Canada. They didn't get seasick either, so we had many meals together.

The next stop for me was Montreal, at a Jewish youth reception center. Soon after arriving, I sat down to write a letter to Ludek who then had a paying job in Marseilles, France. While I was writing, a lady (Margo) asked me to whom was I writing? I answered that "I'm writing to my cousin who is now in Marseilles." She told me that she knew a very nice young Danish lady in Marseilles and asked me to give him her address so that Ludek could meet her. I think Margo liked to order people around. Since she was looking over my shoulder, I had to do it. Normally that would be the end of the story, but fate had different ideas.

Sometime later, after Ludek got my letter, he went for a walk and saw a very nice villa with the name of "Gabby." Later we found that this villa belonged to the King of Spain who had given it to his mistress, Gabriel. As Ludek admired the villa, he remembered that this villa "Gabby" had the same address that I sent him in my letter from Canada. He wanted to see this villa, so he went in, having a legitimate excuse. He asked to see the young lady by the name of Inger Jensen, the girl that I wrote him about. At that time Jewish war orphans lived in this villa and Inger was working there taking care of the children. After Inger showed Ludek the villa, he asked her if she would like to go for a walk the following Sunday. She said "yes." To her surprise, the next Sunday he showed up with a chaperone.

After Ludek came to Canada, he and Inger stayed in touch. A few months later Inger came to Canada. In Montreal, Margo and I met Inger at the railway station. It was the first time I met Inger. She seemed to me to be a very nice girl, so Margo and I put Inger on the next train to Kingston, Ontario where Ludek was an intern at the University Hospital. Inger, after arriving in Kingston, found a job as a librarian at the University Library.

A few months later, Ludek and Inger got married in Ottawa with me as their only witness. I did not get paid the customary \$1.00 fee. I wonder if their marriage was really legitimate.



Just married, Inger and Ludek

Inger's salary helped a lot until Ludek established himself in Edmonton. I visited them in Kingston several times. They had a lot of fun there.

With both of them working they felt rich, so they decided to buy their first car, a "slightly used" Studebaker (President) from a "friend," another intern (Ferguson?) for \$50.00. That was then Ludek's whole monthly salary for working 100 hours a week at the hospital, sometimes 36 hours at a stretch. The car kept on breaking, so one weekend Inger and Ludek decided to repaint it dark blue by hand. They thought if it looked better maybe it would run better. It didn't.

One of the happiest moments that Ludek had from owning his first car was the day that Kingston police, who began to recognize the car, called him, "Doctor, would you please remove your car from the street? It is blocking traffic." Ludek happily answered, "This car is no longer mine. I sold it (for \$20.00). You can tow it away."

Later Ludek and Inger moved to Edmonton, and they lived happily ever after.

Chapter XII

50 YEARS LATER

Trip back to Poland and Drohobycz

After WWII ended the “Iron Curtain” became a barrier between the East and West. People living on either side had practically no contact with each other. It was impossible for anyone from the West to visit Poland or the Ukraine. However, after the Berlin Wall fell in 1989, the political climate changed and it was possible for people from the west to visit Poland and the Ukraine.

I contacted Mietek, who lived in Gdansk, and Phyllis and I went to Poland in 1990. For Phyllis it was the first time. For me it was after nearly 44 years of absence. Mietek and his son Piotr met us at the airport in Warsaw. As I was looking for Mietek at the airport I could not recognize him as he was, but as a young man looking exactly as Mietek did when he was young. So I approached this young man and asked him if his name is Lenartowicz? It was.



From left to right: Romka Lenartowicz, her son Piotr, Phyllis Sherman and Mietek Lenartowicz

Poland looked like, and was, a very poor country. The general appearance of the cities was not very appealing. The cities looked poor, gray and dirty. One could see a lack of maintenance and care missing for many years. The roads were in very bad repair, however, the railways were in very good shape — clean and on time. There were only a few government-owned stores with practically nothing to sell — just empty shelves. However, one could already see the beginning of new businesses starting up which were vibrant and alive. We saw temporary stalls made up from old crates set up on the streets in the center of town by a new group of enterprising merchants displaying their goods, mostly smuggled from Germany.

Mietek and his wife Romka were by then retired from teaching. They both graduated from agricultural engineering after the war. Mietek built his house himself, but he could not buy the land on which he built the house. There was no procedure for him to be able to buy it from the government or from whomever. Recently Mietek told me that he was finally able to buy the land on which his house stands after trying for many years.



Mietek's Home

They had no telephone, which normally took years for one to obtain. He did not even have that hope because he lived outside of town and the telephone lines did not extend past the city limits. Now, after many years, they have their telephone. Otherwise they live quite well. They have plenty to eat; and they were also leasing a small piece of land from the town where they grew strawberries, which they could sell in season.

I could see vast improvements in their standard of living on my second and third trips. It was a very good comparison between the communist and capitalistic systems. During the communist times, people had money but had nothing to buy. In the capitalistic times, they had plenty to buy but no money.

During my visits, Mietek and I reminisced about our good and bad times. We also thought that it would be interesting for us to visit Drohobycz, and we planned to do it. We decided that it might a good idea to take Mietek's son Piotr with us to help us out.

Before we started to contemplate our visit, Mietek saw a program on Polish TV about Drohobycz with a man from Drohobycz by the name of Schreyer narrating it. Mietek remembered his name and he contacted him for assistance with our trip.

Mietek, his son Piotr and I made arrangements for Ukrainian visas to be able to travel to the Ukraine, and in August 1997 we went to Drohobycz. Schreyer met us in Lwow (the largest town in the eastern Ukraine) at the airport. He also had arranged for a car and a driver. We all drove to Drohobycz.

For Mietek and me it felt like the clock in the Ukraine stopped in 1939. Things had not advanced like they did in the rest of the world, nor had they improved during the last 65 years. They just got more dilapidated. There were no real signs of any recently built buildings. The roads were terrible, nothing but potholes. There was not even a hotel for us to stay in in Drohobycz, so we stayed in Truskawiec, a resort town about 6 km from Drohobycz. When we visited Ukraine for

the first time, even Lwow did not have a one decent hotel until a few years later.

During our visit Schreyer took us to Bronicy Lasy, a nearby forest where the Germans routinely executed many Drohobycz Jews during their occupation. We saw 11 large concrete plates with Stars of David at the head of them, which were installed to mark the places of mass graves where hundreds of Jews were shot and buried.



Mietek, me and Schreyer entering the Bronicy Lasy

I told Schreyer about my mother's last and the only letter from Drohobycz in which she wrote to me (via Lenartowicz) that she was working at a local roof-tile factory. I asked him if he knew what happened to the people who worked there. He told me that he worked in the same factory but he didn't know my Mother. He said that in 1943 the Germans took the whole factory workforce, except for a few young healthy men including him, to the Bronicy Lasy where all of them were ordered to strip, and then they shot and buried them there. One of the men managed to survive to tell the story.

Based on what Schreyer told me, I believe that my mother must have been shot and buried in one of those eleven graves in Bronicy Lasy. I arranged to have a small granite plate with my mother's name installed on one of those grave markers. It was similar to plates with others names that were already installed there.



One of the eleven concrete gravestones. Please note on the bottom of the gravestone few of the individual nameplates in memory of the victims. I arranged for a plate with my mother's name to be installed along with a few others which were already there.

From there we went back to town to the New Jewish Cemetery (new in name only) where I knew my father was buried. I remembered the approximate location of the mass grave from counting the numbers of pillars in the cemetery wall (thirteen) during the burial ceremony. The Cemetery was in complete disrepair, overgrown with vegetation. I have tried to have it cleaned up with moderate success.



"New" Jewish Cemetery. I am trying to pinpoint from my recollection where the mass grave is located where my father was buried along with 264 other victims who were killed on November 19, 1942.



I arranged for a large cement gravestone plate to be made and installed (similar in design to the eleven ones in Bronicy Lasy). A granite nameplate with an inscription including my father's name was placed on the top of the gravestone.



The original granite nameplate was smashed some time later by vandals. I had another stronger plate reinstalled. To me this vandalism illustrates the anti-Semitic feeling that still exists in Drohobycz. The translation from the inscription is as follows: Mass grave of 265 citizens of Drohobycz murdered by Nazis on November 19, 1942 only because they were Jewish. One of them was my father, a professor, Dr. Anatol Scherman. The above picture was sent to me by Mr. Schreyer.

A word about Schreyer

Alfred Schreyer is a couple of years older than I am. He was born in Drohobycz where he spent most of the war except the last few months which he spent in Buchenwald concentration camp, before the Red Army liberated him. He managed to escape from Buchenwald a few days before the Russians came, however, he was caught by a German soldier on a motorcycle. The soldier took him back to a nearby town to the German authorities there. What is amazing to me is that this soldier, while trying to escape the Russians, still felt compelled to deliver a Jew back to the German authorities even if his own safety was at stake. This incident proved to me that most of the Germans were "willing executioners."



Picture taken during my visit to Drohobycz. From left to right: Mietek Lenartowicz, Alfred Schreyer, Luciw Leon, my father's student, and myself.

Luciw (a Ukrainian) told me that the German language that my father taught him in high school helped him a lot during the German occupation.

A word about Poles

From my experience, I would put all Poles into three groups based on their behavior towards the Jews during the German occupation.

The majority of Poles were glad to see and approved what the Germans were doing to the Jews, but did not want to take any active part themselves. Most of them just wished the Germans would get rid of the Jews. They would not, and did not, denounce any hiding of Jews so that they would be directly involved in their deaths, but they would do nothing to help.

The second group, a small percentage, took an active part in cooperating with the Germans. Some of them joined the police. Some

of them reported where the Jews were hiding. In effect, they participated actively in the killing.

The third group was an extremely small percentage of the Poles and Ukrainians who helped the Jews to survive, either from compassion, or for money. It should also be remembered that it took a great amount of courage on their part to do so. If caught, they would share the same fate as the Jews.

In absolute numbers, that group of Poles constitutes the single largest group of "The Righteous People" from all the other European nations (about 6,004 individuals). **(The total number of persons awarded the title of "Righteous Among the Nations" from all countries as of January 2007 is 21,758 people.)**

The names of those brave and righteous people, who at their own great risk helped some of the Jews to survive, are now honored by a special organization formed for this purpose. They preserve the Holocaust memories at Yad Vashem located in Jerusalem.

My thoughts

I believe that the enormity of the Holocaust in Poland was made possible because of the cooperation and the tacit approval of the majority of the Polish population. Also, the selection of a majority of the extermination camps to be located in Poland by the Germans was not done at random, but it was done for the same reason above.

I am indeed sorry to have to make that statement since I have and had some very, very good Polish friends and my personal experiences were quite different from the majority of other Polish Jews. I should also say here that the Lenartowiczses did not take any money from us. To the contrary, they helped us as much as they could, even though they did not have much for themselves.

Probably aside from being lucky, the reason that I was successful in surviving as a Catholic was the fact that I was brought up as a Pole. At

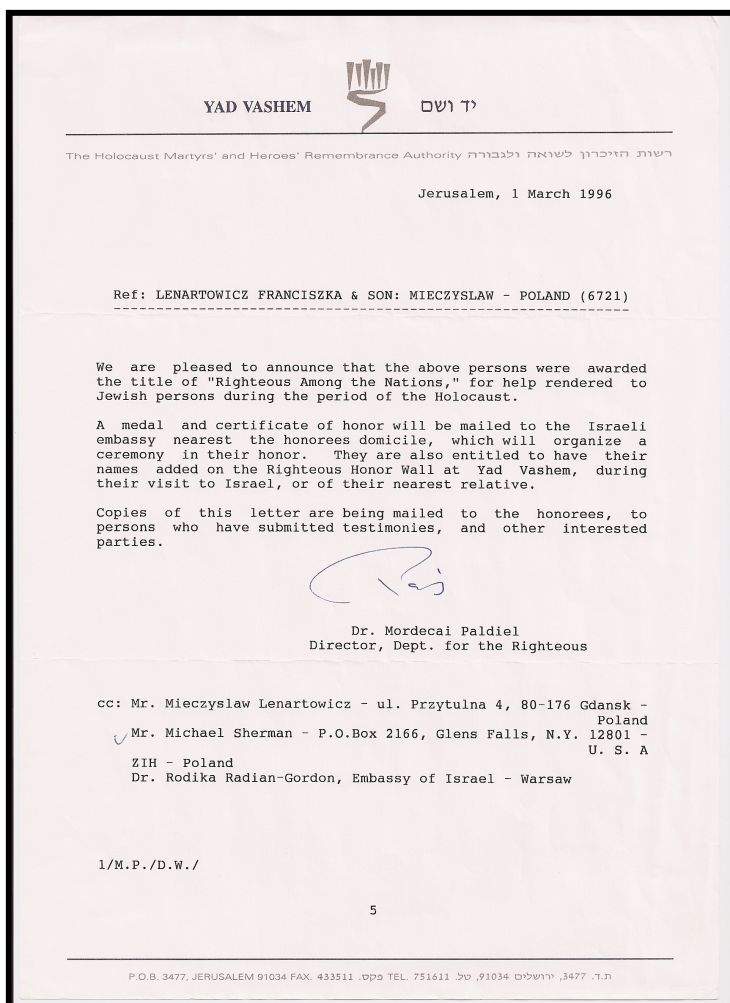
home we only spoke Polish, and only when my parents did not want me to understand something they spoke German. I never learned Hebrew or Yiddish. I went to Polish schools and felt that I was a Pole, willing to die for my country. I was proud to be Jewish and did not see the two being in conflict. At times at school I was exposed to anti-Semitism, but the attitude was not shared by all my Catholic classmates. As later times proved, both Stefan and I had real true Christian friends.

The experiences of the Danish Jews and the help they received from the Danish people were in drastic contrast to what I have described was happening in Poland. In Denmark the clergy played an important role in saving the Jewish population. Unfortunately, the same cannot be said about the majority of Polish priests who had and still have a great influence on the local population. They did not speak up from pulpits against what was happening in Poland.

Some of you might want to read a book about the rescue of Danish Jews during WWII. I would recommend a book called *A Conspiracy of Decency* by Ammie E. Werner. It shows what can be done by willing and decent human beings. It shows sharp contrast in character and behavior between the Danes and Poles. (I will give a copy of this book to Irene.)

This might be a good place for me to mention that I have arranged for Mietek and his mother Franciszka Lenartowicz to be honored at Yad Vashem. I was a little surprised when one day Mietek expressed interest for him and his mother to be recognized by Yad Vashem. I said to him, "All right, I will try and we will see what I can do."

I contacted Yad Vashem, prepared an application, and described the circumstances and details of the help that Ludek, Ludek's mother and I received from the Lenartowicz family. After a few months Mietek and I were notified by Yad Vashem that he and his mother would receive the recognition they deserved.



Yad Vashem's letter advising that both Mietek and his mother Franciszka Lenartowicz are awarded the title of "Righteous Among The Nations"

Some time later, Yad Vashem arranged for a very nice ceremony in Gdansk's City Hall where about a dozen people who helped to save Jewish lives were honored, Mietek among them. There were a number of dignitaries present — the Governor of the Gdansk District, Gdansk's mayor, people from the Israeli Embassy in Warsaw, etc. There were also members of family and friends of the persons being honored In

attendance. Each honoree told briefly about his or her experiences. All of Mietek's family attended, including his grandchildren, and many of his friends were there.

As I said, I was a little surprised by Mietek's request because of the anti-Semitic feelings that still existed in Poland even after WWII. I was not sure how Mietek's friends would behave towards him knowing now that he and his family had helped Jews to survive, but I thought it was his business. After the ceremony, I invited all of Mietek's family and friends for lunch and we had a less formal ceremony of our own with speeches and all. Of course, it pleased me that Mietek was proud of what he and his mother had done.

After the war, Stefan settled in Krakow and got a job in a hospital as a surgeon. He married Krysia, and later both of them immigrated to Vienna. Their best friend Karl Lewalski also moved to Vienna (his mother was an Austrian). Stefan took a job there as a surgeon in a hospital near Vienna, at Moedling.

Stefan and Krysia must have been happy to live in Austria, because when Lukek and I tried to get them to immigrate to Canada and offered to help, they did not want to move. Unfortunately, a few years later Stefan had a heart attack while working at the hospital and died.

Putting all things in perspective, the toughest times for Lukek and me were the years during which we were hiding under assumed names. Those feelings were best described by Lukek who at the time was treated for a cancer. As a doctor, he knew well what his prognosis was. He told me that for him having a cancer was nothing compared with times he endured during the German persecution.



Romka, Mietek's wife, collected a bunch of wildflowers growing in the cemetery near my Father's grave, which Phyllis later had framed.

APPENDIX

JUMPERS & ARYAN PAPERS

Written by Alexander Kimel - Holocaust Survivor.

ARYAN PAPERS

Another form of passive resistance was hiding on "aryan papers." Leaving the ghetto on false "Aryan" papers required not only special physical appearance, but also a special psychological makeup. Staying on the "other side" meant to be hunted by the Jews catchers, exposed to a constant danger of detection, and only a few could take the tension. Many Jews returned to the relative "safety" of the ghetto after venturing to the other side. The stronger people, people that thrived on danger survived.

"Life on the surface (aryan papers) is not easy at all. A Jew on the surface lives in constant fear, under constant tension. Danger lurks, at every step. In the blocks of flats-the landlord, smelling a Jew in every new subtenant, even if he produces a guarantee of Aryanism from a trustworthy source; the gas and electricity account collectors; next, the manager and the porter of the block, a neighbor, etc.- all these constitute a danger for the Jew on the surface, because each of them can recognize him for a Jew. ... Unaccustomed to life "on the Surface", gives himself away by looking round in every direction to see if anyone is watching him, by the nervous expression on his face, by the frightened look of a hunted animal, smelling danger of some kind everywhere."

"While the Ghetto still existed, one could observe the return of great numbers of blackmail victims to the Jewish side which district, broken in spirit, stripped of belongings and money, cursing the Aryan side which had deprived them of their last haven. The returning Jews kissed the earth of the Ghetto, blessed everyday spent there and claimed that there they could rest without continually watching out for the police and the "Black Maria" with the Gendarmerie. Some people returned to the Ghetto even without having been blackmailed, just for fear of this nightmare which prevented Jews on the Aryan side for sleeping at nights and imbued them with deadly fear...for a Jew is no escape, there is merely a choice of kind and place of death. There are four kinds: (1) death in a Ghetto bunker.; (2) death on the Aryan side: (3) death in the S.S. labor camps in Trawniki or Poniatow, and (4) death in an interment."

Ludek's letter of May 28, 1945

999Poznan May 28,1945

My Dear Uncle, Auntie & Ada's,

I only today returned from Warsaw & Lodz where I received your new address from Emil Marz and mother's aunt. That is why I assume that this letter will be first news, because the other addressed to Nowo Kaplinowski probably did not arrive to you. Unfortunately there is no good news to report, so I wondered if I should mention to Uncle, the worst news, but I should. My mommy was killed by a bomb during the Sept. 16,1944, together with Eva in her apartment. I found out about this terrible fate only 2 months ago. To survive many years hoping for a better tomorrow and die at its threshold. I was hoping that before the bombing of the building the inhabitants left and are safe somewhere, or in the worst case were transported to Germany. Therefore still during the insurgency I volunteered to go to the transit camp in Ursus (there was another one in Prszkows, to this one I only traveled – did not stay there) in order to get mother before she would be deported. I looked for her in all the places near Warsaw, wrote letters to Germany, and to the Red Cross. I looked for her through the radio and newspapers. After the Germans left, I went to Krakow and Bochnia, where Adolf Jassem told me that he heard that there Holendars, but it was naturally all too late. Auntie Ala is in Lublin temporarily. I did not see her yet, because I heard about her 10 days ago. I looked for all of you through the Ministry of Justice and only Dr. Schuldenfrei, where I was told that Uncle's sister, the physician,

was looking for you. But the idiots never told her that I, the nephew, have been there many times. I do not know if she knows already about me and Stefan. I have left her a letter in her apartment in Praga. She went temporarily away to Lublin to an ill professor of hers and did not leave her address. Her address, which I received with difficulty, is Dr. Alicja Holendar was, Praga Trgawa 64 m 70. Stefan is now in Krakow, I think as a doctor in surgery and the hospital Voespieczalny, as he planned. I do not know for sure, as he just left a hospital in Nulanosock near Warsaw where he worked until now. I saw him in Krakow about a month ago where he was looking around. We are not corresponding with each other yet. In 1941 when the Germans came to Lwo'w, where I was, and to Drohobycz, where mommy and daddy were, I thought of getting together and flee together eastward, but it could not be done. At the beginning I stayed in Lwow, not to be a burden to my parents. It was very hard, I was broke, and I lost my job at Kulparko'w [mental hospital], where I worked while simultaneously studying. After a while it happened that I started earning money on black market. But it was very dangerous to move around in Lwow, where masses of people died or were sent to camps. Thanks to good luck and ruse(?) I received from Arlkoweudalus (?) [I.D. card], certificate that I was a physician. Lately I was earning good money, so that I it was enough to stay in Drohobycz, and for the start of our journey. But then I suddenly received a wire from Drohobycz that daddy was taken away. I left immediately, hoping that in the camp I would be able to pay to set him free. Unfortunately that was the first so-called "action" in Drohobycz. All those who were layed off because of age, illness or disability were ordered to report to

arbeitsamt (labor office), who did not report was safe. They did not look for him. All were deported, at first we hoped that they went to work in Russia or to Holland, but now we know that they were shot near Drohobycz. Then mommy and I stayed at my uncle's [uncle Michael's parents], in Drohoboycz, where it was safer at the beginning than in Lwow. After a while "actions" started, each arranged differently. We survived a few of them hiding under the floor, lying 2 or 3 days flat on the ground under a cover cut out in the floor, hearing above us geudarms breaking down doors, closets and cellars in any hiding places in search of people to take to the trains en route to crematoriums. Uncle's professor [Uncle Michael's father] was shot in the street during one of the "actions" and we started to realize that they will finish all. Everybody was planning escape to Hungary, or leaving on other documents to another place. The first one to leave was Stefan. His friend [Lewalski]... came with his fiancée to help him. In the beginning it was hard for him, later his situation improved. He became a doctor at a large lumber company, however he realized his situation was hopeless and he left and became a private physician for some aristocrats. Later he stayed brazenly in Krakow where everybody knew him but he was lucky. At last, he arrived in Warsaw and worked in order to have a worker's document from a Polish committee of Social assistance, but his earnings came from working with me until the insurgence. Mommy left with me in November 1942. I left her in Radzyn where she found an apartment through an acquaintance of my cousin [Uncle Michael], who also lived there, but in another apartment. And I left for Warsaw where at the start I slept at train stations, poorhouses, later I found an apartment, obtained

papers and at last got a job in the largest chemical importing firm. I had to start on the lowest level and for me the most dangerous one, as their representative who had to spend all his time visiting stores and factories. Later on I became a clerk, head of sales department, assistant manager and finally I managed the whole office. I was earning very much money and was able to help Stefak make some money too. After a while mommy had to join me and we stayed together outside Warsaw. I had to commute by train to work, but mommy felt better being with me, and after we managed to move to Warsaw, she felt very well indeed. Then insurrection - Ukrainians and SS men came and had all the men go to the barracks, where they had us line up to shoot us, but they changed their minds. I was there for 10 days when they pulled me out together with a surgeon, as physicians needed to work in local hospital, treating wounded Germans & Poles. We have organized in jail a commission of medical assistant. After all that they chased all the women and children and burned the houses. At first they stayed on the side of the insurrection and later they went to nearby villages. Mommy did not want to join them, as she remembered that we agreed to stay put until Warsaw got free, hoping it will not be long. There was the tragedy, had she gone with the others who wanted to save her, she went instead to Ewa at Wajnewa 39, where they stayed in the cellar. Big bombs hit the house and demolished it. She was still cautious, we all asking her to come to an apartment prepared for her, she refused to leave. After many times of going to that house I found some old neighbors, returning to Warsaw, who told me the whole story. We were digging for ten days, but out of 11 persons we found only four, who actually were not in the

cellar. We had to give up. We dug near Eva's landlady body but she was all covered with concrete blocks, so we would have needed dynamite and then the bodies already disintegrating would have been totally destroyed. Stefak does not know anything about it, but I think that Aunt Ala knows only about Ewa, she does not know that mommy went to be with her. Nothing is known about Julek and his father, they were in camp in Plaszow. There is a very slight chance they were moved to a camp in Germany. There is no hope about Auntie. As far as more distant relatives; Henek Okret's wife, her child, and her whole family survived. He is in the U.S. Please give me Henio's and his parent's addresses, because Minka's mother had letters from her but she could not find them when I was at her place. I read all your letters and cards and I know how terribly hard it is for you and what a loss it is for Ada's. As soon as the government agencies started coming to Warsaw, I tried continuously to have you come here. I could get a document only for Uncle and he would have had to try to get the family later. Now, it will not be necessary because the director of the State Department of Repatriation, Mr. Wolski, assured me that general repatriation will take place in June and that you will return together. I think you have to wait. I believe in repatriation and if it fails we will hit hard from all sides. Emil Schldenfrei and I, through our acquaintances, this "last" one believes that if the time relapses you should pay visits to my friends, physicians in Drohobycz. We all know each other and they will help further. I must get Henio's address and also his family's in order to write, and if needed later to start to help him. Maybe you also have Rafal's address [the graphologist]. He is my Daddy's cousin. As I know that you need money, I

contacted a daughter of a doctor in Drohobycz, she is in Lublin. I gave her money and her parents will send you money, and I can continue doing it from our family. Lililka's mother is alive, and from acquaintances is Marian Merz with his parents, colonel – ophthalmologist and his wife but their son, my friend, died during the insurgence. Their second son is in Germany. Generally at the most one percent is left. Prof. Olbrycht was somewhere in Germany, maybe alive. My hospital and I were evacuated to Okecie, near Warsaw when I organized a second hospital. I was, all the time of existence of the camp, in Ursus in that camp where I freed thousands of persons, among them some friends. It helped me, as I became well known and now being 5th year medical student. I am bacteriologist assistant at the University in Poznan and at the same time Prof. Semeran-Siemiański offered me a position of assistant at his clinic at the U of Lodz. Stefak gained a very good reputation as a physician during the insurgency and now he wants to “specialize” in surgery at his old Dr. Jasinski. I was in your apartment in Krakow, where after the Communists entered, a certain Polish major took most of your furniture away. There is a maid that could help in locating it. I asked Stefak to follow the hint because my work and my studies forced me back quickly. I was not at Hernia's, there is Adolf, so it is his duty. At Julek the concierge says that he has nothing. When I was in Bochinak, I talked to Autek who said that he has nothing, and knows nothing, but he knows who took what or bought (but it was an illegal purchase), his neighbor Mrs. Litwinowicz. Let Ala take care of it. The rest of uncle's stuff is safe at his landlady and small things are with the present tenant. A “better” man you must be surprised that I

can write about such trivial everyday things, but life and everyday hard struggle forces me to do it. Please write a lot, because mail from you gets here, ours goes by “field mail”. Adam, I am pleased that you write so well and so cleverly, and that you study. Now I have hope ever more than that, I know that we will meet soon. It’s terrible that my mommy who yearned it, and thought so much about it, did not survive and died almost at the last moment.

Heartfelt greetings and kisses,

Your Ludik

My address: Jan Warozewski
 Poznań, ul. Stowackiego 27 m.7

Superminds

Schermann — Graphologist Extraordinary

by Tony Crisp

Graphology is the study of handwriting, and has many uses. Some businesses ask a skilled graphologist to examine the handwriting of people seeking top jobs in their company. The graphologist would describe the person's strengths and weaknesses. Individuals often seek help from a graphologist to show what training would be the best use of their natural talents. The police use handwriting experts in cases of forgery.

One of the greatest of modern graphologist was a man by the name of Herr Schermann. From early childhood, Herr Schermann, instead of collecting stamps or badges was fascinated by envelopes. He amassed a huge collection and would sit looking at the handwriting, telling himself stories about the people who had written them, trying to form a picture of them. His interest didn't disappear as he grew. Although like any graphologist he studied how people shaped their letters, what slant was on the words, how powerful the force used in writing, he also had another dimension to his skill. He appeared to 'see' the person who had written the words he studied. Some sense beyond those of sight, hearing, smell, taste and feel was operative. Some intelligence beyond a clever mind was at work.

We write what we are

Whether we are aware of it or not, when we write our whole body takes on a certain posture, a mood or emotion may be present as we write. Our age and state of health, as they underlie our movements, also express in the subtle actions of writing. Therefore the marks we have made on paper are the result of what is going on in our body and mind at the time of writing. What Schermann did was to project the process backwards to build up a living impression of all the feelings, the movements, and the type of body and mind that created it.

Cornelius Tabori, a journalist who investigated Schermann in Austria, describes in his book *My Occult Diary* (Rider. UK. 1951) what happened when Tabori showed the graphologist an envelope written by a woman Schermann did not know and had never met. He says, "Schermann looked at it briefly and then started to work. He described the woman's hair colour, how she looked, her figure, even her face. Suddenly she seemed to come alive before me in Schermann himself, because he imitated her voice and the body movements she made. To my amazement he told me the story of her life. It was uncanny the way he had become part of her, and told me exactly about settings, people and objects important to her, even to talks we had shared. I had never experienced anything like it before."

Something that no other graphologist had ever managed before Schermann was his ability to look at a person, then reproduce their handwriting. This is one of the clues to his great skill. His insights into handwriting, linked it completely with the person and all aspects of their body and mind. Because of this he was often asked by doctors to diagnose a person's illness by looking at a sample of their handwriting.

An image in the handwriting

Herr Schermann often worked with the police. One of his most famous cases was regarding a bank forgery. His work on this case far exceeded analysis of whether the writing belonged to the person it was stated as. On 28th June, 1922, the Wiener Bank received a letter from a man signing himself as Herman Zagg. The letter said that on the 23rd of June £80,000 had been deposited in Zagg's account. It asked the Wiener Bank to transfer all of the money to another account in Anglo Bank.

The account was checked, and the money was there. The transfer would have proceeded except that through the carelessness of the junior bank clerk who was to enter the transfer, the pay slip did not get dealt with for two days. Therefore, to make sure the money was still in the account, and to avoid being caught for negligence, the clerk went to the carbon copy of the entry instead of into the bookkeeping office. He was amazed to find there was no entry for the account. He therefore hurriedly told this to his seniors. It was then discovered that someone had written in the £80,000 at the bottom of the day's entries. The writing appeared to be that of the young woman who wrote up the entries. She was therefore suspected of forging the entry to get the money. Someone was immediately sent to the address Herman Zagg had given. No one of that name lived there. Obviously someone within the bank was the forger, and was working with an outside accomplice.

The police were asked to investigate, but could not discover who the forger or accomplice were. Schermann was then asked by the bank to help. Firstly he looked at the letter received by the bank from Zagg. "The person who wrote this is a tall, fat man," he said. "His work calls for much concentration, has led to eye strain, and needs little physical activity. Most of the time he is bending over his work. It is not mental work, but he needs to be precise and accurate. He is probably a watchmaker or goldsmith."

From this the bank could assume the writer posing as Zagg was not one of the staff of the bank. Even so, whoever made the entry in the bank ledger must be an employee. Therefore Schermann was asked to look at the handwriting of fifty of the people working at the bank. Among the fifty was a man named L.B. who Schermann said was the forger. It was not the young woman in charge of the ledger. "This man," Schermann said, "is someone who has long planned this crime. He studied the writing of the woman for a long time, and is an artist at copying people's handwriting. He needed an outside accomplice. I have a mental picture of him persuading the goldsmith, promising much gold for him to work with. L.B. knows the forgery has been discovered. Therefore I need a sample of his handwriting today. To see what he is planning."

Genius at work

Looking at the new sample, Sherman's analysis was that "The man knows he is going to be discovered. Yesterday he explained to his parents that he has committed a crime, and asked them to forgive him. Both parents are ill, and his mother said she would commit suicide if he were sent to prison. It would be difficult for his father to survive also. I can see L.B. is going to say he is innocent until the very end. If you agree not to tell the police I will get him to confess. I want him to remain free to support his parents."

The promise was given as, so far, no money had actually been stolen. The young man was then called to the office and accused of the crime. As Schermann had foretold, he maintained he had nothing whatever to do with the forgery. Then Schermann asked him to write and sign the following:

“Wiener Bank-Verein

Organisations-Bureau

I have nothing to do with the hundred millions. Vienna 11 July 1922”

Writing these few words betrayed L.B.’s secret motives. The man’s first name was Ludwig, but he had started to sign his name as ‘Loui(s). He quickly crossed out this mistake and wrote Ludwig. Looking at this Schermann faced him and told he had taken a goldsmith as an accomplice, and that he had told this man his plans to escape to Paris and use the name Louis. The forger’s confidence shattered and he gave a full confession. The accomplice he named turned out to be a goldsmith who was eighteen stone (252 pounds) in weight. So Schermann had not only correctly assessed the forger and his motives, but had also given an exact description of the accomplice. The forger also gave details of his sick parents that confirmed Schermann’s accuracy.

The young forger was dismissed from his job, but no police action was sought. Due to Schermann’s kindness, the man was able to continue his life without a criminal record. He later wrote a letter thanking Schermann for saving him from prison and complete disgrace.

[Super Minds 1](#) - [Super Minds Chapter 2](#) - [Super Minds Chapter 3](#) - [Super Minds Chapter 4](#) - [Super Minds Chapter 5](#) - [Super Minds Chapter 6](#) - [Super Minds Chapter 7](#) - [Super Minds Chapter 8](#) - [Super Minds Chapter 9](#) - [Super Minds Chapter 10](#) - [Super Minds Chapter 11](#) - [Super Minds Chapter 12](#) - [Super Minds Chapter 13](#)

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